

# SERMON SEED

*Fifty-Two Studies for Sermons*

REV. ROBERT TUCK, B.A.





24  
16



*J Morgan*

*Jan 1905*

*1/6*

FIFTY-TWO STUDIES FOR SERMONS

91

EDINBURGH:

PRINTED BY LORIMER AND GILLIES

31 ST. ANDREW SQUARE.

H W Berry

Amag Road

Birta down 16-12-19

# SERMON SEED

**Fifty-Two Studies for Sermons**

*WITH SUGGESTIONS FOR PULPIT WORK*

BY

REV. ROBERT TUCK, B.A. (LOND.)

AUTHOR OF

"THE HOUR BEFORE HOLY COMMUNION," "THE SOUL'S RE-BIRTH," ETC.

"Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee."—ST. PAUL TO TIMOTHY.

LONDON

JAMES NISBET & CO., LIMITED

21 BERNERS STREET, W.

1901

**BIBLICAL AND PULPIT WORK BY THE SAME  
AUTHOR.**



- The More Excellent Way.** Volume of Sermons. (Hodder.)  
**The First Three Kings of Israel.** Studies for Teachers. (S.S.U.)  
**The Age of the Great Patriarchs.** Studies for Teachers. (S.S.U.)  
**Biblical Things not generally Known.** 2 Volumes. (Stock.)  
**Handbook of Biblical Difficulties.** (Stock.)  
**Handbook of Scientific and Literary Bible Difficulties.** (Stock.)  
**Revelation by Character.** Old Testament Studies. (Stock.)  
**The Saviour of the World.** The Mission of the "Man Christ Jesus." (Stock.)  
**The Master's Guide for His Disciples.** (Stock.)  
**The Preacher's Homiletic Commentary.** Hebrews to Revelation. Large  
8vo. 2 Volumes. (Funk & Wagnall.)  
**The Pulpit Commentary.** Homilies, in 12 Volumes. (Kegan Paul & Co.)  
**The Weekly Pulpit.** Volumes IV. to VII. (Stock.)  
**The Biblical Illustrator.** Work in 4 Volumes. (J. Nisbet & Co., Ltd.)  
**The Biblical Treasury.** Re-editing, 14 Volumes. (S.S.U.)  
**Lesson Help for Busy Teachers.** Fifteen Years' Work in the *Sunday School  
Chronicle.*

**BOOKS OF PULPIT ILLUSTRATION.**

- Cyclopædia of Nature Teachings.** (Stock.)  
**Lessons from Life, Animal and Human.** (Stock.)

**BOOKS FOR THE DEVOUT LIFE.**

- The Hour before Holy Communion.** Sacramental Preparations. (Marshall  
Brothers.) 2s. 6d. bound as Gift Book. Cheaper Edition, 1s. 6d.  
**The Soul's Re-birth.** A Book for Inquirers. (Partridge & Co.) 1s. Paper  
Bound; 8s. per dozen, from the Author, Forest Hill, S.E. Post paid.



## PREFACE.

---

THESE "Sermon Studies" are not *Outline Sermons* intended to meet the needs of ill-furnished or inefficient ministers. They are the materials, put ready to their hand, out of which earnest men may *make their own sermons*, and gain some fulness, and freshness, and variety in their work.

The author has had in mind the helping of three distinct classes of ministers and teachers.

1. Under the pressure of the weekly strain of life—which at times becomes an undue pressure—ministers occasionally find the usual quiet and careful preparation is wholly impossible; and they are driven either to make up a sermon hurriedly; to preach over again one of their old ones—out of which the heart has gone—or to adapt some one else's sermon to their purpose.

These "Studies" offer to ministers at such times the *suggestive material* on which their minds may be readily set working, so that sermons with the personal and individual stamp on them—in which alone lies true power—may be produced in the very limited time that may be at their command.

2. Very many ministers have but small exegetical, expository, sermonic, and theological libraries, and many

country ministers have no such reference libraries within easy reach. There may even be many who would find it difficult to select the choice and pointed bits, that would be really suggestive and helpful, even if such books were at command. The Author has had some thirty years' experience of this kind of work, as a teacher of teachers, and offers, in these "Sermon Studies," just such selections as will start trains of fresh thought, and furnish the mind with helpful facts and truths. He gives the sifted products of much study and research.

3. There are also very many engaged in pulpit service, who have had no such direct mental training for their work, as could secure wise, orderly, and efficient methods of study, and of pulpit preparation. They are not making the best use possible, either of their powers or their opportunities, because no one as yet has *put them in the way*.

For such workers the Author provides *models* of methods of pulpit preparations, but models only in a *suggestive* sense. He has no faith in patterns. He would not provide them if he could. It may, however, be a very real help to us to see how another "brother-worker" does it.

The Author has always believed that "good work tells best." He has striven throughout life to maintain his early formed resolve, that nothing but his "best possible" should ever be laid on the pulpit-altar. His method has been, to select his subjects on the Sunday evening, and to let them come, or grow, out of the day's work. He devoted Tuesday to close study, and then let

the material simmer in his mind until the Friday and Saturday, when he wrote out both sermons carefully.

His method, on the Tuesday, was—first to gain a germ or central thought, in connection with the text. This secured that the treatment should bear the stamp of *individuality* and independence. Then the exegesis of the text was carefully studied, and related Scripture passages were carefully compared. As far as time permitted, Commentaries were consulted, and printed sermons were examined, with a view to effective division and illustration. The studies were regarded as complete, when a general outline of the course the sermon should take was suggestively indicated.

Preaching the Gospel is preaching *Christ*, and that whole circle of truth which gathers round Him, and is inspired and glorified by His living personality. The keynote, that orders all the music of these pulpit-studies, is the supreme truth of Christ,—the living Saviour, Who is saving now, and Who has been made competent for the work that He is doing, by the human experience through which He passed.

The Author, with some measure of hopefulness, offers these samples of pulpit-preparation to the kindly consideration of his brethren, who are still in the active service of the—

“Best of men that ere wore earth about Him.”

FOREST HILL, S.E.





# CONTENTS.

---

| CHAP.                                                         | PAGE                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. WALKING THE WAVES, . . . .                                 | Matt. xiv. 26, . . . . 1                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 2. JESUS IS THE RESURRECTION, . . . .                         | John xi. 25, . . . . 7                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 3. BLACK BUT COMELY, . . . .                                  | Song Sol. i. 5, . . . . 14                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 4. HAVING THE SON, . . . .                                    | 1 John v. 12, . . . . 19                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 5. REDEEMED UNTO GOD, . . . .                                 | Rev. v. 9, . . . . 23                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 6. FIVE WISE, FIVE FOOLISH, . . . .                           | Matt. xxv. 1-13, . . . . 28                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 7. FAITH OR FAITHFULNESS, . . . .                             | Hab. ii. 4, . . . . 35                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 8. BALAAM, THE TIME-SERVER, . . . .                           | 2 Peter ii. 15, . . . . 42                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 9. GRACE IN ADAPTATION, . . . .                               | Psalm lxxii. 6, . . . . 47                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 10. THE ELOI, . . . .                                         | Mark xv. 34, . . . . 54                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 11. THE SAFETY OF REPENTANCE, . . . .                         | Luke xiii. 5, . . . . 63                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 12. THE TWO MARYS, . . . .                                    | Matt. xxvii. 61, . . . . 68                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 13. THE REASONABLENESS OF MAKING<br>LIFE A SACRIFICE, . . . . | <div style="display: inline-block; vertical-align: middle;"> <div style="font-size: 3em; vertical-align: middle; margin-right: 5px;">}</div> <div style="display: inline-block; vertical-align: middle;"> Rom. xii. 1, . . . . 75 </div> </div> |
| 14. APOSTLE AND PRIEST, . . . .                               | Heb. iii. 1, . . . . 80                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 15. THE DEATHLESS CHRIST, . . . .                             | Rom. vi. 9, . . . . 87                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 16. RIGHT KNOWLEDGE IS LIFE, . . . .                          | John xvii. 3, . . . . 94                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 17. GLORIFYING OUR FATHER, . . . .                            | John xv. 8, . . . . 99                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 18. THE CHARACTERISTIC "LAW OF CHRIST,"                       | Gal. vi. 2, . . . . 104                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 19. CARE FOR OUR KINDRED, . . . .                             | Esther viii. 6, . . . . 111                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 20. PLEASING GOD WITH OUR FAITH, . . . .                      | Heb. xi. 6, . . . . 116                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 21. THE SONG OF THE FULLY REDEEMED, . . . .                   | Rev. xv. 3, . . . . 121                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 22. THE LAMB OF GOD, . . . .                                  | John i. 29, . . . . 126                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 23. THE FAITH IN ABEL'S SACRIFICE, . . . .                    | Heb. xi. 4, . . . . 134                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 24. FINDING OUT OUR NEIGHBOUR, . . . .                        | Luke x. 29, . . . . 141                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 25. GOD THE CREATOR, . . . .                                  | Gen. i. 1, . . . . 149                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

| CHAP. |                                                  | PAGE                                             |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| 26.   | THE STERNER SIDE OF CHRIST'S<br>WORK, . . . . .  | { Luke ii. 34, 35, . 157                         |
| 27.   | REPROVING THE WORLD, . . . . .                   | John xvi. 8, . 165                               |
| 28.   | THE UPLIFTED SERPENT, . . . . .                  | { Num. xxi. 8, with } 172<br>John iii. 14, 15, } |
| 29.   | THE PARABLE OF THE TARES, . . . . .              | Matt. xiii. 36, . 180                            |
| 30.   | THE GADARENE DEMONIAK, . . . . .                 | Luke viii. 37, . 189                             |
| 31.   | THE MAN OF SORROWS, . . . . .                    | Isaiah liii. 3, . 199                            |
| 32.   | POWER IN THE CRUCIFIED, . . . . .                | 1 Cor. i. 24, . 205                              |
| 33.   | THE JUDGMENT-SEAT, . . . . .                     | 2 Cor. v. 10, . 214                              |
| 34.   | SECRET FAULTS, . . . . .                         | Psalm xix. 12, . 221                             |
| 35.   | THE PLACE FOR WORSHIP, . . . . .                 | John iv. 20, . 226                               |
| 36.   | THE ANGELS OF THE CHILDREN, . . . . .            | Matt. xviii. 10, . 233                           |
| 37.   | WHAT CAN BE SEEN THROUGH TEARS, . . . . .        | John xx. 11, . 240                               |
| 38.   | A PRESENT EVIL WORLD, . . . . .                  | Gal. i. 4, . 248                                 |
| 39.   | JEALOUSY OVER A PURE SPIRIT, . . . . .           | Psalm li. 11, . 256                              |
| 40.   | THE CHURCH OF THE FIRST-BORN, . . . . .          | Heb. xii. 23, . 262                              |
| 41.   | MORAL MAN TRAINED BY BEING<br>TRUSTED, . . . . . | { Gen. ii. 15, . 270                             |
| 42.   | A FREE COURSE FOR THE WORD, . . . . .            | 2 Thess. iii. 1, . 278                           |
| 43.   | THE UNPARDONABLE, . . . . .                      | Matt. xii. 32, . 283                             |
| 44.   | THE SUPREME CONSTRAINT, . . . . .                | 2 Cor. v. 14, . 292                              |
| 45.   | HELPLESS LAW, . . . . .                          | Rom. viii. 3, . 297                              |
| 46.   | CHRIST'S MAGNIFIER, . . . . .                    | Phil. i. 20, . 306                               |
| 47.   | A SOUL-SEARCHING QUESTION, . . . . .             | Job ix. 2, . 314                                 |
| 48.   | SOUL-TRIUMPH, . . . . .                          | John xix. 5, . 322                               |
| 49.   | HOW WE BELIEVE IN GOD, . . . . .                 | 1 Peter i. 21, . 330                             |
| 50.   | THE SOUL'S IMMORTALITY, . . . . .                | 2 Tim. i. 10, . 336                              |
| 51.   | OUR LIVING AVENGER, . . . . .                    | Job xix. 25-27, . 343                            |
| 52.   | THE CHRIST-WORKER'S AIM, . . . . .               | 2 Tim. ii. 21, . 351                             |

# INDEX OF TEXTS.

|                        | PAGE |                          | PAGE |
|------------------------|------|--------------------------|------|
| Genesis i. 1, . . .    | 149  | John xi. 25, . . .       | 7    |
| „ ii. 15, . . .        | 270  | „ xv. 8, . . .           | 99   |
| Numbers xxi. 8, . . .  | 172  | „ xvi. 8, . . .          | 165  |
| Esther viii. 6, . . .  | 111  | „ xvii. 3, . . .         | 94   |
| Job ix. 2, . . .       | 314  | „ xix. 5, . . .          | 322  |
| „ xix. 25-27, . . .    | 343  | „ xx. 11, . . .          | 240  |
| Psaln xix. 12, . . .   | 221  | Romans vi. 9, . . .      | 87   |
| „ li. 11, . . .        | 256  | „ viii. 3, . . .         | 297  |
| „ lxxii. 6, . . .      | 47   | „ xii. 1, . . .          | 75   |
| Song Sol. i. 5, . . .  | 14   | 1 Cor. i. 24, . . .      | 205  |
| Isaiah liii. 3, . . .  | 199  | 2 Cor. v. 10, . . .      | 214  |
| Habakkuk ii. 4, . . .  | 35   | „ v. 14, . . .           | 292  |
|                        |      | Galatians i. 4, . . .    | 248  |
| Matthew xii. 32, . . . | 283  | „ vi. 2, . . .           | 104  |
| „ xiii. 36, . . .      | 180  | Philippians i. 20, . . . | 306  |
| „ xiv. 26, . . .       | 1    | 2 Thess. iii. 1, . . .   | 278  |
| „ xviii. 10, . . .     | 233  | 2 Timothy i. 10, . . .   | 336  |
| „ xxv. 1-13, . . .     | 28   | „ ii. 21, . . .          | 351  |
| „ xxvii. 61, . . .     | 68   | Hebrews iii. 1, . . .    | 80   |
| Mark xv. 34, . . .     | 54   | „ xi. 4, . . .           | 134  |
| Luke ii. 34, 35, . . . | 157  | „ xi. 6, . . .           | 116  |
| „ viii. 37, . . .      | 189  | „ xii. 23, . . .         | 262  |
| „ x. 29, . . .         | 141  | 1 Peter i. 21, . . .     | 330  |
| „ xiii. 5, . . .       | 63   | 2 Peter ii. 15, . . .    | 42   |
| John i. 29, . . .      | 126  | 1 John v. 12, . . .      | 19   |
| „ iii. 14, 15, . . .   | 172  | Revelation v. 9, . . .   | 23   |
| „ iv. 20, . . .        | 226  | „ xv. 3, . . .           | 121  |



# SERMON SEED.

---

## I.

### WALKING THE WAVES.

“When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.”—MATTHEW xiv. 26.

*Germ Thoughts.*—In St. John's narrative we find the key to our Lord's gracious purpose in thus walking on the water (see John vi. 15). Excited by the signs of Divine power in our Lord's feeding the multitude, the disciples had been inclined to take part with the people in making Christ a Messiah-King, and beginning a revolt against the Roman authority. That could not be allowed. That showed the disciples still had but a poor earthly conception of their Master. He made it the occasion for impressing on them His unearthly, His spiritual, nature and mission. No symbol could more effectively set them thinking of His relation to the spirit-world than this “walking on the water.” And still our supreme difficulty is to get men to realise the spiritual Christ as the true redeeming force, in humanity, and in the world. We are constantly limiting Christ by judging Him according to the laws that rule *material* things. We *fear* when He seems to be a *spirit*. But apprehend aright the spiritual Christ, and from our hearts will be removed all fear of the spiritual and the ghostly. Enough for us is this—the spiritual is Christ's realm.



*Scripture References.*—Compare Mark vi. 45-56; John vi. 15-21. Note that only Matthew mentions the request and failure of Peter; and only John mentions the scheme of the people to make Jesus a king. Treading upon the waves, heights, of the sea, is a figure for the supreme power of the Almighty, in Job ix. 8.

*Various Renderings.*—Verse 22, “a ship,” may be “the ship,” that in which the disciples had crossed the lake. So in verse 23, “a mountain,” may be “the mountain,” that is, a particular and well-known one. Verse 26, for “a spirit” read “an apparition.”

*Exegesis.*—Verse 22, *Other side*—i.e., to Bethsaida, the town on the western shore of the lake, near Capernaum. 24.—*Tossed with waves*, literally, “tortured by the waves.” All mountain-girdled lakes are subject to sudden and severe storms; but we must beware of exaggeration in describing these waves. They were dangerous, relative to the size of the boats or ships. 25.—*Fourth Watch*. Both Romans and Jews divided the night into four watches. The fourth was really early morning. They were then nearly three-fourths of the way across. They had furled the sail, and taken to their oars. Mark makes this addition: “He would have passed by them.” That is, “He seemed as if He would.” 33.—*The Son of God*. We know what *we* understand by this term; but it is necessary to inquire exactly what the disciples meant by it. To them it was simply a synonym of Messiah. The Hebrews use “son” and “servant” with much the same range of meaning.

*Notes.*—*Webster and Wilkinson.*—Sending the disciples away alone was our Lord’s way of answering their prayer, “Increase our faith.”

*Archbp. Trench.*—For the probable cause of the necessity for constraining the disciples to enter the ship, see John vi. 15. In this miracle Christ intended to

discipline the disciples, and lead them to higher truths than hitherto they had learned. In the case of the first storm on the lake, Jesus was with them in the boat, and they must have felt that at any time they could rouse Him. Now, He teaches them that they must not always be clinging to His bodily presence; He puts them forth into danger alone (as a mother-bird deals with her fledglings), and by the issue He will awaken in them a confidence in His ever-ready help, whether He be seen or unseen. "They supposed they had seen a spirit;" but often Christ is mistaken now when He comes to us in some unwonted form or way. The disciples might easily have despaired of any help reaching them, and yet it *does* reach them.

*A.L.R. Foote, in "Incidents in the Life of our Saviour."*  
—Compare this miracle with that of "Stilling the Storm." The new feature is, Jesus walking on the waves. Note the power of our Lord's *voice*, in dispelling the fears of the disciples. The human voice is wonderful as an exponent of individual mind and character, and as an instrument for affecting others. Learn that the believer must expect often to meet with trials and difficulties in the way to heaven. Though Jesus is not now (materially) present with His Church, He is attending to its interests as much as if He were. He is always present spiritually, and in times of great emergency He draws very nigh to them, bringing deliverance. In times of mental darkness and despondency, Christ draws very nigh, bringing deliverance. He is the Living Christ.

*Olshausen.*—Illustrative of Christ's dominion over the natural world, He withdraws Himself personally from the control of natural laws. The disciples found their Jewish prepossessions as to the Messiah, more and more

cleared up in the light of such scenes. The Old Testament representations of Jehovah's glory were put before their eyes in the person of Christ. (See Job ix. 8.) It was inconceivable to the disciples that anything of a bodily nature could walk on water.

Note the distinctive peculiarities of Christ's body. It is common to conceive of the glorifying of Christ's body as the work of a moment, at the Resurrection or the Ascension. But if we suppose the Spirit's work in glorifying and perfecting Christ's body, to have been spread over the Saviour's whole life—(certain periods being still distinguished as seasons of special activity)—much that is obscure will be made clear. A body thoroughly of the earth, chained down by unseen bonds to earthly matter, cannot shake itself free from its origin; but that a higher bodily frame, teeming with the powers of a loftier world, should rise above the earthly level, is less surprising. The manifestation of Christ's hidden glory was designed to build up His disciples in the faith. They saw more and more clearly with Whom they had to do, and perceived that He was the revelation of the invisible Father.

*Bp. Ellicott.*—This is the fullest manifestation of Christ in the world of nature. John shows its importance on account of its dogmatic symbolism. John relates more fully the impression made by the miracle of feeding the multitude. The people sought to seize Him, and make Him a King against His will; and He, shrinking from that form of sovereignty, withdrew from His disciples, dismissed the multitude, and on the mountain height passed the night in prayer. It was as if, in this unwonted stir of popular excitement—not against Him but in His favour—this nearness to a path of earthly greatness, instead of that which led onward to

a cross, He saw something like a renewal of the temptation in the wilderness.

On the supposition of Christ's sovereignty we may see in our Lord's walking on the sea something like an anticipation (not unconnected, it may be, with the intensity of that crisis of His life), of that "Spiritual body," of which we see another manifestation in the Transfiguration, and which became normal after the Resurrection, reaching its completeness in the wonder of the Ascension.

*J. F. Vallings, M.A.*—In their hour of need unforgettable, He walks across the waves to the tossing boat and labouring crew. Perhaps this was rather a work of psychical sympathy than of power. Sympathy annihilates distance, and reads the thoughts of the farthest away. They were in actual jeopardy, in fear; perhaps further disheartened at His repulse of an offer which, made by so vast a Galilean multitude, if not national in act, was national in promise. Their faith must be strengthened, their hope confirmed, their love not left comfortless. And so, quite naturally, and without effort, He stepped across the moonlit surge, and brought them to the haven where they would be.

*Dr. Edersheim.*—This and similar instances of "dominion over the creature," are not beyond the range of what God originally assigned to man, when He made him a little lower than the angels, and crowned him with glory and honour; made him to have dominion over the works of His hands, and all things were put under his feet. Indeed, this "dominion over the sea" seems to exhibit the divinely human, rather than the humanly Divine, aspect of His person, if such distinction may be lawfully made.

*Sermons in Library.*—On Mark vi. 31, Arnold's "School

Sermons," pp. 201, 211, 245; Jacox's "Secular Annotations," p. 242. On Luke ix. 13, Bushnell's "New Life," p. 253. On John vi. 12, Keble's "Christian Year," p. 156. On John vi. 19, 20, "Weekly Pulpit," Vol. v. p. 88. See also, in "The Saviour of the World" (E. Stock), Chap. xiv., "Symbolical Incidents," p. 149.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—Realise the state of mind of the disciples, which is indicated by their excited account of their first "mission," as given to Christ on their return. This partly explains their need of deeper teaching. He who can walk the waves must be essentially a spiritual being. One who, therefore, has full mastery over Nature, over His Body, and even over His Will. Just this our Lord here impressed on His disciples—1. Over Nature—*i.e.*, all *around* Him; His environment, His material conditions. Show how, for our minds, this is effectively symbolised in *mastering water*. 2. Over Body. Lifting it out of all its characteristic body bondages and limitations. Making it entirely an agent to be used by the Spirit. Show that this is the idea we attach to the term, "Spiritual Body." See the Transfiguration and Resurrection bodies of our Divine Lord. 3. Over Human Will. This is the subject of temptation. In our Lord's conduct after the "Feeding," we see spiritual principle mastering temptation as it touches the human will. Need not think the disciples understood so fully as we may do. Still, they felt the spiritual being of Christ, and so they were being trained to realise that His must be a *moral* and *spiritual* redemption. "Ye shall be Kings," really involves the Mastery, in Christ, of the spiritual over the material. The lesson of the "Spiritual Christ" we must learn; and also of the spiritual Christlikeness, for we, too, should be able to master our body—*i.e.*, to walk, with Christ, "the waves in wondrous guise."

## II.

### JESUS IS THE RESURRECTION.

“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life.”—JOHN xi. 25.

*Germ Thoughts.*—To understand our Lord’s meaning it is important to observe that He adapted Himself precisely to the general knowledge, and the present mood of Martha. We ought to ask what he meant to convey by His words to her mind. Then it will not be difficult to apprehend that, meeting her idea of resurrection as a *future* experience, He affirmed that it was realised *now*; and meeting her notion of the resurrection of a Bodily life, He explained that the true resurrection is spiritual, the resurrection of the soul out of an old life into a new. He Himself was embodied resurrection, and embodied life. The mystery in Him was, that His resurrection involved the resurrection of those united to Him—they are risen with Christ; and His life quickened life wherever it spiritually touched. To put our Lord’s thought into other language, we may represent His meaning thus:—“I am the resurrection, and whosoever is in Me is resurrected. I am the life, and whosoever is in Me is spiritually alive.” A soul is “dead” when its fleshly body is its *prison*. A soul is “alive” when its fleshly body is its *agency*. Our Lord was a soul *alive*.

*Scripture References.*—Luke xiv. 14, “the resurrection of the just.” John v. 29, “Resurrection of life . . .



resurrection of judgment." John v. 21, "As the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom He will." John vi. 39, 40, "I will raise Him up at the last day." John i. 4, "In Him was life." John vi. 35, "I am the bread of life." John xiv. 6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Col. iii. 4, "Christ, who is our life." I John i. 1, 2, "Show unto you that eternal life." I John v. 11, "This life is in His Son."

*Various Renderings.*—In verse 25, for "were dead," read "have died." Revised Version gives—"Though He die, yet shall He live."

*Exegetical Notes.*—*Olshausen* on the relation between "life" and "resurrection." The two expressions are properly synonymous.

Christ is called the "Life," not merely because He makes alive, but because, as the source of life (*i.e.*, of true being), He *is* life. In like manner He is called the "resurrection," because He actually *is* that resurrection. The resurrection, however, is nothing else than the *life* in conflict with *death*. The "life" viewed by itself means "being" without the antagonistic principle (that which is to be vanquished), while in the "resurrection," life appears in the act of destroying death (in itself and others). It is in this victorious aspect that "life" is exhibited in the person of the Lord.

*H. W. Watkins, M.A.*—The first two words of our Lord's answer, expressed in the fulness of emphasis, teach her that the resurrection is to be thought of as His person, and that it is to be thought of as actually present. "I," His words mean, "and none beside Me, am the Resurrection. I *am* the Resurrection—a present life, and not simply a life in the remoteness of the last day." In the same sense in which He has declared

Himself to be the Water of Life and the Bread of Life, supplying in Himself every need of spiritual thirst and spiritual hunger, He declares Himself to be the Resurrection, revealing in His own person all that men had ever thought and hoped of a future life, being Himself the power which shall raise them at the last day, and could therefore raise them now. This is because He is also "the Life," and therefore everyone in communion with Him shall live. In the true thought of the spiritual life, the fact of physical death does not interrupt that life.

On John v. 29 *Watkins* says:—"The law of the spiritual resurrection now is the law of that which shall be hereafter." It seems that the Pharisees expected the resurrection of the just to accompany the Messianic Advent.

*George Reith, M.A.*—From the comfort of hope in a distant day of re-union at the resurrection, Jesus leads Martha to the comfort of faith in Himself. The resurrection is not a blessing apart from Him. The word resurrection is to be taken in its widest sense, so that it is true to say life results from resurrection, and resurrection from life, to the believer. He must share Christ's life in order to have the power within him of the resurrection from the grave to the endless life, and by sharing Christ's risen life now in faith, he is in fact risen with Christ, and independent of every future change, death of the body itself, and shall be kept from the endless death.

*Lücke* on chapter v. 21-29.—The Jews believed that when their Messiah came He should fulfil all God's promises of redemption, and pardon, and inheritance of the earth for Israel. The Messiah should also call the *holy dead of Israel* from their graves that they might enjoy the blessings of the new Kingdom of God.

*Dr. Edmond Staffer* has the following notes on Jewish ideas concerning the resurrection of the dead :—The Pharisees had formulated, under the Maccabees, the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. The Pharisees did not intend merely the survival of the soul, the immaterial part of man, nor even of a spiritual body, as St. Paul afterwards teaches, but a re-union with the very body which had been laid down. One curious passage makes this quite clear. Adrian asked Rabbi Joshua, the son of Hananiah : “ Whence does a man live again for eternity ? ” And he replied, “ From the spine of the back.” Adrian said, “ Prove it to me.” Then Joshua, the son of Hananiah, took a little bone of the spine, and placed it in water, and it would not melt ; he put it in the fire, but it was not burned ; he put it in a mill, but it was not crushed ; in a forge and hammered on it, but the anvil was shattered and the hammer broken. Such were the arguments used by the Pharisees in disputing with the Sadducees. In the visible reign of Messiah upon earth, for which the Pharisees were looking, His first act would be to raise the bodies of the just, and this doctrine was retained in part by the early Christians. Some of them adhered to the doctrine of a resurrection of the body in the most material sense. . . . The Jews, who were realists, and who never knew how to draw a philosophical distinction between body and soul, had no conception of a future life apart from a return to existence of the material body.

*Dr. Edersheim.*—The Resurrection and the Life are not special gifts either to the Church or humanity, but are connected with the Christ—the outcome of Himself. Most literally, He *is* the Resurrection and the Life—and this, the new teaching about the Resurrection, was the object and meaning of the raising of Lazarus.

The hope of the resurrection-world appears in almost every religious utterance of Israel. It is the spring-bud on the tree, stripped by the long winter of disappointment and persecution. This hope pours its morning carol into the prayer which every Jew is bound to say on awakening, it sheds its warm breath over the oldest of the daily prayers which date from the time of our Lord ; in the formulæ, "from age to age," "world without end," it forms, so to speak, the rearguard to every prayer, defending it from Sadducean assault, it is one of the few dogmas denial of which involves, according to the Mishna, the loss of eternal life.

*Dean Farrar.*—It was not for a spirit like Martha's to distinguish the interchanging thoughts of physical and spiritual death which were united in that deep utterance ; Martha evidently had not dreamt that Lazarus would now be awaked from the sleep of death.

*Godet* says :—"To die in the fulness of light, in the calm glory of the life which is in Jesus, is no longer that which human language calls by the name of death."

*Sermon Notes.*—*Webster.*—Christ rises to the source and cause of spiritual and eternal life ; quits the specific idea of resurrection, and concentrates His and our attention upon that of "life in Him," which the living and departed believers equally enjoy.

*Archbp. Trench.*—The state of the soul apart from the body is never considered in Scripture as itself desirable, nor as other than a state of transition. The Scripture acknowledges no true immortality apart from the resurrection of the body. Martha's answer, in verse 24, indicates a little impatience at such cold comfort. Her love was earthly, clinging passionately to the earthly objects of its affections, but needing to be exalted and purified. "Resurrection and Life are *in Me*. They are no distant things, as thou speakest of now, to find

place at the end of the world ; they are no powers separate from Me, as thou spakest of lately, when thou desirest that I should ask of another that which I possess evermore in Myself."

Resurrection is *more* than Life, for it is life in conflict with, and overcoming death ; life meeting death in its highest manifestation, that of physical dissolution and decay, and vanquishing it there. It is *less* than Life, for so long as that title belongs to Him, it implies something still undone, a mortality not yet wholly swallowed up of life.

*Sermons in Library.*—On verses 23, 24, Sibbes' Works, Vol. vii. 316 ; M'Cheyne's "Ad. Rem.," p. 475. On verses 21-32, Howson's "Medit. on Miracles," p. 141 ; R. Stier's "Jesus and Martha," "Words of Jesus," Vol. vi. p. 20.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—Martha fully participated in the Jewish-Pharisaic notions of resurrection which prevailed in her day. They were rather Maccabean, than properly Old Testament, notions. Messiah was to be the regenerator of the nation ; and the old Maccabean warriors were cheered for their conflicts by the assurance that, with Messiah's coming, there would be a "resurrection of the just," to partake in the successes and dignities of the Messiah's kingdom. It throws new light on our Lord's conversation with Martha, to see that she was not thinking of the final Day of Judgment, but of the expected Messianic resurrection of the just. To the Jew the "last days" always meant the times of Messiah when everything was to be put straight. If we paraphrased Martha's word, so as to unfold her thought, we should say she meant—"I know that Lazarus, as one of the *just*, will be raised in Messiah's day, but I fully hoped You were Messiah ; then, surely, this is the last time, and You can raise him." Our Lord's answer is in line with all His

teaching. He always endeavoured to lift men from material to spiritual considerations. He ever showed the inmost, the reality, of things. The anticipated bodily resurrection of the just was but the symbol of the true and spiritual resurrection, which the true spiritual Messiah has actually accomplished. "True," it is as if Jesus said, "your brother shall rise again, and be restored to your human fellowship. But do not miss seeing the deeper truth; he *is* risen—he is spiritually risen—he has resurrection from sin and self, and life unto righteousness and God, in having Me, in having set his faith and love on Me. Nay, if you can receive it, he has never really died. He was risen before he, what you call, died." It is, perhaps, our Lord's highest lesson in *spiritual* truth. As spiritual, we ought to be able to enter into His meaning. It is the soul that is resurrected, and its resurrection follows its vital union, through faith and love, with Him Who *is* the Resurrection and the Life.



### III.

#### BLACK BUT COMELY.

“I am black but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon.”—SONG OF SOLOMON i. 5.

*Germ Thoughts.*—There is a characteristic *duality* in Christian experiences. And it is not merely a difference in moods. It is not that at times, and under pressure of bodily infirmities, or anxious circumstances, or mistaken and mischievous, introspective preachings, a Christian is disposed to think bitter things concerning himself; and then in times of sunshine and success, and optimistic preaching, he is as disposed to think comfortable and hopeful things concerning himself. It is not that a rising self-conceit at times inspires a sinful boasting. What seems remarkable, and deserving of serious consideration, is that in the normal experience of the devout Christian, the two moods, or states of mind, dwell together. We might even go so far as to say, that the Christian ideal is not attained unless the two do dwell together, and the man cherishes both the sense of his own frailty, and the sense of his own dignity. And the believer's comfort is, that though his Divine Lord does not miss seeing the blackness, He does not miss also seeing the comeliness. He loves us for the “comeliness,” and easily passes out of His consideration the “black-

ness." He knows that the blackness is only something *on* us ; the comeliness is something *in* us.

*Scripture References.*—Comely, or beautiful, see Song vi. 4 ; Psalm cxlix. 4 ; Ezek. xvi. 14 ; Psalm xc. 17. For his comeliness the believer goes out of himself to Christ, as "the Lord our Righteousness," Jer. xxiii. 6. He puts on Christ, Rom. xiii. 14. So adorned, he has on the "best robe," Luke xv. 22. Better than angels' garb, Rev. vii. 14. Compare also Psalm xlv. 13 ; li. 7 ; 2 Cor. v. 21.

*Modern View of the "Song of Solomon."*—The allegorical interpretation prevailed at an early period of the Church. This is evident from the commentaries—both Jewish and Christian—which have come down to us. The Fathers, from the third to the sixth century, adopted the mythical sense, as setting forth, in the words of St. Augustine, "The holy loves of Christ and His Church." In the eighteenth century, celebrated writers showed that the book could be taken in a literal sense, and regarded as a simple history of "the triumph of true love in humble life over the temptations of royalty."

If the author was Solomon, we are to understand that he wrote of one whom all his advances, united with the offer of a royal diadem, were unavailing to turn from her attachment to her shepherd. A beautiful country girl, possibly engaged as a shepherdess, and so exposed to, and tanned by the sunshine, was deeply attached to a country youth. The king, passing in his chariot one day, was fascinated by her beauty—so fresh, and so different from the painted beauty of the court ladies. He had her carried off to his harem, and then set himself to win her love. It was in vain. The country beauty remained firm and faithful to her country lover, and the king had at last to let her go back to him.

In the text she is represented as talking to the lily-white and painted ladies of the harem, with whom her tanned and fresh country skin contrasted in so marked a way, that it may be spoken of as black. Poor girl ! she felt quite out of place, and was begging these ladies to help her get back to her home. She could not but admit that she was comely ; but, then, she pleads that she was bronzed and ruddy with the sunshine, and did not match the other royal ladies at all.

*Dr. Davidson* says :—It is the celebration of a pure affection, which holds out against the temptations of a court, and rises superior to all the seductive arts of even a monarch.

*Dr. James Pratt* says :—She next addresses the daughters of Zion, who are aware of her attachment. She tells them of the hard treatment she had received from her brothers, being obliged to keep their vineyards, and exposed to the scorching sun in doing so. To her the daughters of Zion answer reproachfully. *Dr. Pratt* gives the following free metrical translation :—

“ Daughters of Zion,—Dark though be my face  
As Kedar’s curtains, ’tis not a disgrace ;  
My comeliness is like the royal tent  
Wherein King Solomon the summer spent.  
Disdain me not, whom thus the sun hath brown’d.  
On me, alas ! my mother’s sons have frown’d ;  
To keep their vineyards they have destined me,  
But not a vineyard of my own to see.”

*Aglen* says, “ There is impressed on the whole poem a feeling of the superiority of wedded love over concubinage, and of monogamy over polygamy. The language is like that of all love poetry, passionate, sensuous, voluptuous, in some cases with Oriental licence

passing the bounds of the Western standards of sobriety and propriety."

*Note on the Poetical Figures of the Text.*—Dark as the Kedareen tents of black goats' hair, beautiful as the royal pavilions with their rich hangings. (Aglen regards it as "a little playful raillery.") *Dr. Thompson*, "Land and Book," p. 171. In view is a group of Arab tents spread along the base of the hill. His companion says, "If tents of Kedar are no more attractive than these, the bride has fallen upon a lame comparison for her charms." He replies, "Ay, but observe, it is *she* that is black, not the tents of Kedar." Even black tents when new, and pitched among bushes of liveliest green, have a very comely appearance, especially when both are bathed in a flood of evening's golden light. See Van Lennep's "Bible Customs," pp. 204, 400, 502.

*Sermons.*—"The Church's Blackness." "Saints' Cordials," p. 259. Bishop W. Nicholson. "The Beauty of the Church Militant." "On the Apostles' Creed," p. 450. See Krummacher, "Sermons on the Canticles," London, 1839. R. Sibbe's Works, Vol. vii. 95, and on.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon* on somewhat old lines.—The Church is the aggregate of the individuals composing it. A crystal is an aggregation of crystals.—Show consequences of this truth. There is no *extra* grace floating in the Church. The week's faith, zeal, love, and prayer is the sum of the individual faith, zeal, love, and prayer. Or rather, it is the balance struck between faith and unbelief, zeal, and apathy, love and coldness, prayer and prayerlessness. Refer text to individual and Church conditions. I. Christ teaches every true believer to say, "I am black." A deep sense of self-loathing always accompanies a clear sense of God's presence and favour. There is consciousness of outward deformity, and consciousness of inward corrup-

sions. II. Christ teaches every true believer to say, "I am comely." A happy sense of beauty and acceptance accompanies a real enjoyment of our union with Christ. (In Eastern lands the poor woman when married to a king becomes a queen.) III. Christ teaches the true believer to say both these things concerning Himself together, and at the same time. If we feel only "black," there can be but sadness and despair. If we feel only "comely," there is grave peril of spiritual pride. If we feel both together, there will be humble joy and lowly steadfastness.

## IV.

### HAVING THE SON.

“He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”—1 JOHN v. 12.

*Germ Thoughts.*—Each of the Apostles and early Christian teachers has his own characteristic way of presenting the saving relations into which men come with Christ. We need always to remember the many sides from which the primary and essential Christian truth may be viewed, and so the possibilities of its meeting the needs of all individualities. A man's character, disposition, and temperament may decide his redemptive key-note, or his particular circumstances, surroundings, and relations may decide it. What was characteristic of the Apostle John was a personal relation with the Lord Jesus. We may say that he had *personal possession* of Him. There seems to have been, in St. John's case, something more than the other disciples knew. He *had* Christ as we only have those whom we love with personal affection. So we cannot wonder that he should plead so earnestly for a relation with Christ like His own. “Having” is “believing,” and *something more*.

*Scripture References.*—John xiv. 21; Phil. iii. 9; Heb. vi. 19; 1 John ii. 23; 2 John, ver. 9; John i. 4; iii. 36; v. 24; 1 John iv. 9.



*Various Renderings.*—The Revised Version makes only one alteration. For “hath life” it renders “hath the life.”

*Exegetical.*—Some attention needs to be given to the preceding verses. In ver. 4 we are told that “our faith,” which unites us to Christ, and makes us participators in His victory, “overcometh the world.” In ver. 5 there is a more precise explanation of faith, as “he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God.” The following three verses, 6 to 8, give the foundation of this faith, the amount of testimony or witness on which it may repose. (Rev. Ver. properly omits ver. 7.) The attestations or testimonials to Christ are threefold—the water, the blood, the spirit. Remembering that Bible writers use Eastern figures, which must often seem strained to us, we may take the “water” to refer to the Divine attestation at Christ’s baptism; the “blood” to the attestation of God’s acceptance of Christ’s suffering obedience. And the “spirit” to the attestation of the power that accompanied the preaching of Christ crucified. Ver. 9 reminds us that the testimony of two human witnesses is regarded as sufficient ground of confidence. But here is a threefold testimony. Ver. 10 reminds us that to the threefold outward witness the believer can add the testimony of his own personal experience. He “has the witness in himself.” In ver. 11 the subject of belief is clearly and tersely stated. This is what we believe—“That God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.” There is a sense in which this “life” is *by* His Son, as an instrumental cause; but there is a higher sense, in which this life is *in* His Son, as its great centre. The life is in Christ for impartation to us, and the receptivity in us is our faith. To have Christ by faith is to breathe the first breath of the eternal life.

*Notes.*—*Life*—*Eternal life*.—Life, ζωή, is in Scripture

applied to physical, mental, moral, and spiritual life. Here spiritual life is meant, and of this eternity of duration is only one quality among many. All our conceptions of life ought to start from God, in whom the perfection of life is realised. He is the first life, and the source of all life. Our usual way is scientific, not religious. We ascend from the lowest stages of life up to the highest in God ; whereas our estimates would be relatively more correct if we began with God, and from Him descended through the orders, to the lowest forms.

“Eternal life does not mean here the mere continuance of life after death, whether for good or evil ; it is the expression used throughout St. John’s writings for that life in God, thought of without reference to time, which can have no end, which implies heaven, and every possible variety of blessedness, and which consists in believing in God the Father, and in His Son. Its opposite is not annihilation, but the second death, existence in exclusion from God” (*Sinclair*).

Believing is not mental appreciation, but that act which begins trust, the soul-satisfaction which *acts* by trusting. Believing is a state ; when it moves in action it becomes appropriation.

Treating the idea of “having the Son” mystically, our Lord said, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you.”

*Dr. A. Plummer.*—For the “record” read the “witness,” as in verse 9. This is what the external witness of God, when it is internally appropriated by the believer, consists in—viz., the Divine gift of eternal life. Eternal life has its seat and source in the Son, who is the Prince or Author of life (Acts iii. 15). If the Son has the life in Himself, then whoever has the Son has the life, and no man can have the one without the other.

*Bengel.*—Verse 12 has two clauses ; in the former the Son is mentioned without the addition “of God,” for believers know the Son ; in the second clause the addition “of God” is made, that unbelievers may know thereby what a serious thing it is not to have Him. In the former clause “has” bears the emphasis, in the second “life.”

*Preachers' Homiletic Commentary.*—The essential of salvation is “Having the Son.” 1. God's gift to us—eternal life. 2. God's gift is in a person. 3. The person gives the gift when He gives Himself.

*Sermons.*—Simeon, C., Works, xx. 539 ; Dr. R. Hawker, Works, iv. 159 ; Bishop Mant, Sermons, i. 49 ; Eden, C. P., Sermons, 135.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—The natural introduction is a skilful presentation of the adequate basis on which Christian Faith rests. It centres on a person, the Lord Jesus Christ. That He is what He claims to be ; that He can do what He claims to do ; are attested by a fourfold testimony :—1. The witness at His baptism. 2. The acceptance of His self-sacrifice. 3. The power accompanying the preaching of His Gospel. And 4. The personal experience of believers. Then show that all our attention is fixed on *this person*. Open out—1. The mystery in Him ; (1) Eternal life is in Him ; (2) God is giving Him to us ; (3) God is giving to us eternal life by giving to us Him. 2. The relation into which we may come with Him. “Have Him” (1) as we have a gift when we accept it ; (2) as we have a person when we set our love on Him. 3. What comes to us with Christ, when we can be said to “have Him” ? New life in our life, making ours a new life. The new life being Christ's life, its fitting earthly expression is seen in Christ's life on earth.

## V.

### REDEEMED UNTO GOD.

"For Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood."

—REVELATION v. 9.

*Germ Thoughts.*—As first apprehended our redemption is from the consequences of *sin*. As more fully apprehended, it is from the power and dominion of *self*. But these are negative. Redemption needs to be apprehended on its positive side. It is redemption unto something—when the fully redeemed, in the glory, contemplate it, they are absorbed with the idea that it has been redemption unto God. And then they see that Christ's blood stands for his *self-sacrificing endeavours* to redeem them unto God. The song of the fully redeemed recognises that Christ had wrought in them up to measures of sacrificing effort that can only be represented by blood-shedding. The Lamb is the animal-figure for that character in Christ which gives Him His attractive, persuasive, and sanctifying power on human hearts.

*Scripture References.*—Acts xx. 28; Rom. iii. 25; 1 Cor. vi. 20; Eph. i. 7; Heb. ix. 12; 1 Pet. i. 18, 19; 2 Pet. ii. 1; 1 John i. 7; Rev. xiv. 4.

*Exegesis.*—Most writers, as Moses Stuart, regard this *Book* as containing a record of the secret counsels of God. But this is too vague and general. We must apprehend it in precise relation to the subject about

which St. John is writing the book, which is the mystery why the Church is left in the world, and called to bear the brunt of such calamities, temptations, and persecutions; and the book explains the present work of the Living Christ in the Church, for the sake of the world, and in the world for the sake of the Church. When St. John wrote *that* was a sealed book, whose contents only the Living Christ could know. But those contents the progress of the Christian ages gradually unfolded.

Verse 6.—*Lamb*; the word is a diminutive, meaning “little lamb.” Comp. John i. 29, 36; Isa. liii. 7; observe that in neither of these cases is the idea of the lamb sacrificial. It indicates *character*. *As it had been slain—i.e.*, it looked as if it had been slain, and had risen to life again. Comp. Jesus showing His wound-prints to doubting Thomas. The death-marks are the sign and proof of the completion of that life-sacrifice which is infinitely acceptable to God, and proves Christ to be fitted to undertake the further and final stages of the redemptive work.

*Seven horns and seven eyes*; emblem of all-round, perfect competency. Verse 9, *hast redeemed*. Boyd Carpenter prefers, *didst redeem*, as referring to Christ’s completed work, His great victory in suffering and death. But this misses the point, that those who sing are those in whom the full work of grace has been wrought, and they rejoice in a redemption which has covered *their whole lives*. *Redeemed us to God*; this keeps the idea of ransom and purchase for God, but carries the further idea of making the bought ones worthy of God. What Christ undertook was redeeming us from bondage, and sanctifying us when redeemed.

The “blood of the Lamb” is an expression found in

Rev. vii. 14 ; xii. 11 ; xiii. 8. This last is important, "Slain from the foundation of the world."

*Commentary and Sermon Notes.*—*Godet.*—The fifth chapter pictures the glory of the Lamb—Jesus sacrificed and risen again. In His hand is a roll made up of seven leaves, and sealed with seven seals ; this book contains the Divine decrees which are about to be put into execution with regard to the world. These two circumstances—that the Lamb is intrusted with it, and that it is He who successively breaks its seals—evidently signify that it is He who is to be the executor of the designs of God : accordingly, He is represented as possessing the "seven eyes," and the "seven horns ;" that is to say, the fulness of omniscience and of omnipotence, without which He could not accomplish this Divine work.

*Moses Stuart.*—"Lamb" is to St. John a favourite appellation, occurring about thirty times in the Apocalypse. It is indicative of two things—viz., Perfect innocence and propitiatory sacrifice or victim. Wearing the marks, or bearing the appearance of having been slain. In what way this appearance of having been slain developed itself, whether in the apparent marks of wounds or of blood, the writer does not say.

To buy, purchase, means also to ransom or redeem, because slaves were ransomed from bondage, and the condemned from execution, by the payment of a price which was accepted in lieu of their bondage or imprisonment. So here, the slaves of sin and Satan, those who lay under the sentence of the Divine law, and were condemned to the second death, were bought off or redeemed by the blood of Christ, in order that they should be the freedmen of the Lord.

*Critical Commentary.*—The word "arnion," or "little lamb," is found in Revelation exclusively. It expresses endearment, the endearing relation in which now Christ stands to us. He was "standing," though bearing the marks of one slain.



*Biblical Dictionary of Antiquities.*—A legend preserved by Robert of Mount St. Michael, tells how, in the year 1183, the Holy Virgin appeared to a woodman at work in a forest, and gave him a medal bearing her own image and that of her son, with the inscription, “Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, Dona nobis pacem.” This she bade him bear to the bishop, and tell him that all who wished the peace of the Church should make such medals as these, and wear them in token of peace.

Sermons, Robert Hall’s Works, Vol. v. 149; “Gospel of Jesus Christ,” Addison Alexander, p. 48.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.* — Introduce by a brief explanation of the book, and the reason why it could be committed to Christ to carry out its Divine decrees and purposes. The whole work of God for humanity is its *redemption*. But how much that involves! He who had so well carried out His trust, of a *part* of it, was the one who might be intrusted with the whole, and the completion. Explain, too, that those who sing the song of praise are first-fruits, specimens, of the fully redeemed, in whom the work of Christ is perfected, and who are consequently samples, or illustrations, of what Christ is now working towards in all. The figure of Christ as the Lamb is that of a living, standing, active being, only the wound-marks serve to identify Him, and to remind of the experience He has passed through, which has fitted Him for His present, and continuous work.

I. *What work did Christ undertake?* Seen in its climax, it was our redemption *unto God*. Explain man’s sin and woe as being his self-alienation from God. Man has put himself into bondage to himself. The breaking of that bondage gives him liberty to resume his proper and natural relations with God. To be

redeemed unto God is to be in full and happy relations of sonship to Him.

II. *How does Christ accomplish that work?* In stages. 1. He removes hinderers and hindrances. 2. He works out, in a human life, specimen right relations with God, as representative of what we all should be. 3. He gains personal relations with us, through winning our love by His sacrifice, so that He can change us into His image, and make us sons like He is.

III. *What is due to Christ for His work?* So far as it is carried out, grateful praise; the ever-new song. So far as it is being carried on, full confidence, perfect openness, ready responsiveness. Our redemption to God is what Christ now has in hand; and what we have to do is to be "co-workers together with Him."

## VI.

### FIVE WISE AND FIVE FOOLISH.

MATTHEW xxv. 1-13.

*Germ Thoughts.*—Though all humanity may be regarded as seeking good and God, it must be recognised that a large proportion has always failed in its quest. But it needs to be clearly seen that the failure can always be accounted for within the range of human conditions. "Good" for a dependent moral being must be a thing of attainment, and the attainment often involves effort and sacrifice, that at given times, seem to be beyond powers. The supreme woe for an uprising creature is the failure to attain what might have been attained. To be outside when we might have been inside; and to find the door shut against us.

Life is full of opportunities that come but once.

*Scripture References.*—Matt. xxiv. 43, 44; Mark xiii. 33-35; Luke xxi. 36; 1 Cor. xvi. 13; 1 Thess. v. 6; 1 Peter v. 8; Rev. xvi. 15.

*Various Renderings.*—Verse 1, for "lamps" read "torches." Verse 3, read "for the foolish." Verse 6, read "a cry is raised," omit the word "cometh." Verse 8, read as margin "going out," not "are gone out." Verse 13, omit the words "wherein the Son of man cometh."—κ A.B.C. Edd. R.

*Exegesis*—Verse 1, *Their lamps.*—"Either like the familiar Roman lamps carried in the hand, or attached

to staves ; or else torches, which were sometimes fed with oil." Verse 2, *Wise*. The word is used of prudence or practical intelligence, a characteristic of the steward (Matt. xxiv. 45 ; Luke xvi. 8). Verse 5, *Slumbered and slept*. Some nodded from drowsiness, and some fell fast asleep. Verse 6, *There was*. Literally, the expression is dramatic. "There is a cry made." Verse 10, *Marriage*. Should be marriage-feast.

*Notes from Commentaries.—Olshausen.*—The external form of the parable is to be explained by the customs of the Israelites. In the Jewish idea ten persons formed an assembly. Foolish virgins represent those who seek that which is pleasing and sweet in the service of the Lord instead of following Him in right earnest, and who hence neglect to labour after thorough renewal, and to build in the right way on the foundation laid. Oil designates the Spirit ; the virgins were not altogether destitute of this higher element of life. Their hearts glowed with love to the Lord, which led them to go out and meet Him ; but their faith had no root beside feeling. Olshausen thinks the wise virgins were blameable in sleeping. The bridegroom delayed his coming so long that at last even the wise virgins slept. The interval was a time of general temptation. The perplexities occasioned by the surprise of the Lord's coming discover the difference between the virgins. The wise ones who have wholly given themselves to the Lord are able not only to arouse themselves, but also to rekindle their torches into a vigorous flame. This the foolish ones cannot do, lacking the inward supply of the Spirit. These foolish ones were shut out of the kingdom, but not necessarily deprived of eternal happiness.

*Critical Commentary.*—The object in the main is to illustrate the vigilant and expectant attitude of faith. The lighted lamps are just the Christian profession. The supply of oil means the inward reality of grace, the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

*Neander* sets forth the necessity of constant preparation for the uncertain time of Christ's second advent. It is the representation of the idea of Christian virtue under the form of prudence.

*Matthew Henry*.—Boaz, when he married Ruth, had ten witnesses (Ruth iv. 2). Foolish virgins because having no stock—no principle within. No stock of sound principles; no rooted dispositions. The fault—sleeping—is common to all the virgins. It indicates the remissness of a long profession.

*Archbp. Trench*.—Two mistakes to which the word “virgins” gives rise—1. That all belong to Christ, but some found unready, deferring their blessedness; 2. The word applies only to those who have taken the vow of virginity. But virginity here is, surely, the profession of a pure faith. The turning point of the parable is the third verse. Here we find the difference between Romanists and Reformers. Reformers say the lack was the living principle of faith. The Romanists say that it was their having a faith which was without works. Note the parallel between this and the seed which had no deepness of earth. There was the Christian life in manifestation, but not fed from deep internal fountains. Augustine thinks the sleeping refers to the sleep of death. But it is enough to say that the sleeping is necessary to the parable, for, if not sleeping, the foolish would have seen that their lamps were going out. And this brings out strongly the hopelessness of their case when the cry of the bridegroom was heard. We cannot *borrow* grace. Christ comes in all the great crisis of life.

*Bengel* says there are four classes of people—1. Those who enter heaven abundantly. 2. Those cast on the shore a wreck. 3. Those going the broad road

to destruction. 4. Those who, though not far off from the kingdom, miss it after all. These last are represented by the five foolish virgins.

*John Calvin.*—Some expositors torment themselves greatly in explaining the “lamps,” and the “vessels,” and the “oil”; but the simple and genuine meaning of the whole is that it is not enough to have a lively zeal for a while. We must have in addition a perseverance that never tires.

*Marcus Dods, D.D.*—The imagery illustrates the meaning of our Lord’s command to *watch*. He does not mean, “Be ye always on the watch,” but “be ye always prepared.” The parable is not addressed to those who have never made any preparation for Christ’s coming, but to those who have not made sufficient preparation. It reminds us that all who may at one time show similar preparedness for Christ’s presence do not in the end show the same. It is the same everywhere. The reason of this so frequent failure is here indicated. The folly of the foolish virgins consisted in this, that while the wise took oil, they took none. Those who, in the end of their life fail to show as much fitness for Christ’s presence as they did at some previous period, fail because they have been all along superficial, and have never been filled with grace at the source, have not had the root of the matter in them. The foolish virgins are a warning to all who are tempted to make conversion everything and edification nothing; who cultivate religion for a season, and then think they have done enough. The parable also teaches that there must be regard paid both to the outward and inward life; the outward works which manifest, and the inward graces which are the life of a Christian. Foolishness, not wickedness, is represented by these virgins. The



wise man is he who shapes his conduct in accordance with the truth of things, and with actual facts; the foolish man is he who shuts his eyes to what he does not wish to see, and fancies that, somehow, though he cannot tell how, things will go all right with him.

*Illustration.—Indian Marriage Procession.*—At a marriage, the procession of which I saw some years ago, the bridegroom came from a distance, and the bride lived at Serampore, to which place the bridegroom was to come by water. After waiting two or three hours, at length near midnight it was announced, as if in the very words of Scripture, “Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.” All the persons employed now lighted their lamps, and ran with them in their hands to fill up their stations in the procession. Some of them had lost their lights, and were unprepared; but it was then too late to seek them, and the cavalcade moved forward to the house of the bride, at which place the company entered a large and splendidly illuminated area before the house, covered with an awning, where a great multitude of friends, dressed in their best apparel, were seated upon mats. The bridegroom was carried in the arms of a friend, and placed upon a superb seat in the midst of the company, where he sat a short time, and then went into the house, the door of which was immediately shut, and guarded by sepoys. I and others expostulated with the doorkeepers, but in vain.

*Sermons.*—Romaine’s Works, Vol. v. p. 361. R. Barclay, p. 378. A suggestive poem, by Owen Meredith, in “*Lyra Anglicana*,” p. 127.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—Introduce by endeavouring to find the connection of this, and the two following parables, with the prominent thought in our Lord’s mind when He uttered them. That thought was the uncertainty under which all His servants are left in trust. They never know what will happen. They must

always be ready ; and they are always ready if they are always at their best possibility of service. His advice is "Watch." He explains this to mean, "Be ye also ready." And in the three parables He illustrates what He means by "being ready." In the parable of the Virgins, He shows that he means—prepared for every opportunity and emergency that may arise: showing *forethought*. In the parable of the Talents, He shows that He means—faithfully using in our life-spheres all the powers with which we are intrusted ; showing *activity, enterprise, and energy*. In the parable of the Judgment, He shows that He means—gracious in all those relations into which our trust may bring us ; manifesting in all our service "heavenly divine charity."

The second part of the introduction should concern the peculiarities of Eastern marriage customs. With them our Lord had a life-long familiarity.

I. *The good that was common to them all.*—They had all responded to the invitation. They all had made effort. They all had provided that which was immediately needed. There is no difference even in their slumbering while they waited ; and that was quite the best thing they could do. Apply to Christian discipleship. At the beginning a common and sincere experience. All who begin mean well. But Christian life is often not apprehended aright at its beginning. It is not seen that profession must be tested by experience, and especially by delay and call to wait. II. *What proved faulty in some.*—They had but a limited horizon. They had no forethought. They made no provision for *what might be*. It is so with half the world. It has no to-morrow. It lives in to-day, so to-morrow takes it at unawares. These foolish virgins showed their foolishness in—(1) making no provision for emergencies ; and (2) in

depending upon others when the emergency came. Their foolishness is seen in this that they missed their opportunity. The cheer to which they were invited passed them by. Illustrate from the life of servants and stewards. They may be at their work, and yet fail because they did not keep in mind the uncertain time of their master's coming home, and failed to be ready for that coming. So Christian disciples fail if they start without forethought. Christian Life must be a testing strain, and the strain times must be uncertain. They often come suddenly and surprisingly. The true preparation to meet them is ever-fresh renewal of inward grace and strength. This is suggested by the "oil in the vessels."

## VII.

### FAITH OR FAITHFULNESS.

“But the just shall live by his faith.”—HABAKKUK ii. 4.

“For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith : as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”—ROMANS i. 17 (GAL. iii. 11).

*Germ Thoughts.*—We have here a striking instance of the Christian way of reading more into the Old Testament than its writers had in mind. St. Paul uses Habakkuk's words to mean more than the prophet put into them. Indeed he may be said to misquote the prophet, seeing that he leaves out the important word “his,” and puts an entirely new meaning into Habakkuk's word “Faith.” The right man—the righteous man—the man who sets heart and energy on being always right—lives in his faithfulness. We find the connection between the prophet and the apostle in this, that a man's faithfulness is necessarily based upon and sustained by his faith ; because faithfulness implies a recognised outside standard, a supreme person whom in faithfulness we serve. There can be no faithfulness without faith, and therefore a man may be said to live both in his faithfulness and from his faith.

*Scripture References.*—Higher idea of life, John iii. 36. Expression, “Just live by faith,” found also in Heb. x. 38. Compare 1 Cor. i. 30 ; 2 Cor. v. 21. For sanctifica-

tion by faith, see Acts xxvi. 18 ; Rom. vi. 22 ; 1 Cor. vi. 11 ; Eph. v. 8, 9, 26, 27 ; Heb. xiii. 12.

*Various Renderings.*—In Habakkuk, for “just” read “righteous.” For “faith” read “faithfulness,” or “trust.” Revised Version, margin, “In his faithfulness.”

In Romans, Revised Version, “But the righteous shall live by (Greek from) faith.” “The just by faith”—*i.e.*, he whose righteousness proceeds from faith, shall live.

*Exegesis.*—*Webster and Wilkinson.*—Hebrew of Hab. ii. 4 means, “The righteous man shall be saved as such by that which gives and constitutes his character as righteous (Ezek. xviii. 22); in, or by, his righteousness he shall live—viz., by his faith.” So the sense of the Hebrew is preserved if we connect either with *δικαίος* or with *ζήσεται*.

In Rom. i. 17, *γὰρ* introduces the reason why this Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. By the “righteousness of God” we understand the method in which God treats man as “righteous” in conformity with His righteous character. “From faith to faith,” not from a dim and general faith to one clear and particular, but the righteousness of God arising from or out of faith—the mere simple unmeritorious act of belief—is disclosed as proceeding to faith, the grace, the Christian virtue, the fruit of the Spirit, which is the root and foundation of all godliness. Paul’s way of connecting faith with righteousness is seen in Rom. iii. 30 ; v. 1 ; ix. 30 ; x. 6 ; Gal. ii. 16 ; iii. 8.

*Notes.*—*Barnes.*—The expression “righteousness of God” is capable of the following interpretations:—1. It may mean the attribute of God denominated righteousness, or justice. It has been supposed that it was the design of the Gospel to make this known, or evince his justice in the way of saving. 2. Some think it means

that the goodness or benevolence of God is revealed, &c. 3. The phrase "righteousness of God" is equivalent to God's plan of justifying men, His scheme of declaring them just in the sight of the law, or of acquitting them from punishment, and admitting them to favour. In this sense it stands opposed to man's plan of justification—by works. God's plan is by faith.

The reference in Habakkuk is to the condition of the Jews under Babylonish Captivity. Those who preserved confidence in God's promise should be restored out of it.

*Principal Moule.*—In Habakkuk the context defines the meaning of faith to be trust, confidence in another, as opposed to self-confidence. Such humility of trust marks the *just* man, the man right in God's sight; and thereby he stands possessed of life—*i.e.*, peace and security before God. The brief but profound statement is taken by the Apostle as the text of his great statement of justification. "By faith," is literally "out of faith"—*i.e.*, in consequence of it, after it, as the condition on which "life" is given.

*A. C. Jennings, M.A., on Habakkuk.*—The reward promised to patient waiting on God is *life*,—deliverance from destruction. Here the words have no doctrinal significance. Their ethical importance is, however, undeniable.

*Dr. Sanday on Rom. i. 17.*—The Apostle uses the word "faith" in his own peculiar and pregnant sense. But this is naturally led up to by the way in which it was used by Habakkuk. The intense personal trust and reliance which the Jew felt in the God of his fathers is directed by the Christian to Christ, and is further developed into an active energy of devotion. "Faith," as understood by St. Paul, is not merely head belief, a purely intellectual process such as that of which



St. James speaks when he says, "The devils also believe and tremble;" neither is it merely *trust*, a passive dependence on an Unseen Power; but it is a further stage of feeling developed out of these, a current of emotion setting strongly in the direction of its object, an ardent and vital apprehension of that object, and a firm and loyal attachment to it.

*Prof. Agar Beet.*—Habakkuk mourns the vileness and lawlessness around. He foresees as its retribution the rapid and complete conquest by the Chaldæans. He appeals to the character of God; and expresses for himself and the godly in Judæa an assurance of deliverance grounded on God's character, "We shall not die." He betakes himself to his watch-tower, and awaits the reply of God. In solemn tones God proclaimed the destruction of the proud Chaldæans, and declares that while others perish, "the righteous man shall live," shall live, "by his faith." In the Old Testament, the words "faith" and "faithful" denote, not "belief,"—as almost always in the New Testament, but "faithfulness," that constancy and stability of character which makes man an object of reliance to others. In these words God assumes that faithfulness is an element of the righteous man's character, and declares that by his faithfulness he shall survive. It is quite evident that this faithfulness arises from belief of the Word of God. The prophet is unmoved because he leans upon the veracity of God. "Shall live" refers primarily to this present life.

The omission by St. Paul of the word "his" is unimportant. The assertion made in this section of St. Paul's epistle, that God accepts as righteous all who believe the Gospel, is the foundation stone of this epistle.

*J. H. Godwin, D.D.*, renders, "But the upright person

because of faith shall have life (Comp. Psalm xxiv. 5). 'Faith' in the Old Testament generally denotes trust, confidence, and rarely simple belief. By 'life' understand safety and prosperity of every kind. The true, highest, and only permanent life, is from God; and it is through faith in Him. He who obtains salvation through confidence in God, must owe his *uprightness*, and all that makes him *right* for salvation, to the same faith."

*Bp. Ellicott on Gal. iii. 2.*—The Apostle's object is to show that the idea of justification falls wholly out of the domain of the law, and is incompatible with its very nature and character. It seems best to connect "by faith" with "shall live." Alford takes the other view.

*Moses Stuart on Heb. x. 38.*—Faith is here put as the means of preservation in opposition to apostasy or defection, in the other part of the verse, which is the means of destruction or disapprobation. So that here the connection of "by faith" is with "shall live," not with "just."

*Matthew Henry.*—"From faith to faith," from the first faith, by which we are put in a justified state, to after faith, by which we live, and are continued in that state. From faith engrafting us into Christ, to faith deriving virtue from Him as our root. *Just by faith*: there is faith justifying us. *Live by faith*: there is faith maintaining us.

*John Angel James on Justification* (Pastoral Addresses, p. 277).—The business of faith is our justification. *By* or *through* faith; not *for* faith. Believing is no more meritorious than doing. Observe the distinction between justification and sanctification. By the fall man became both guilty and depraved. Justification takes away our guilt. Sanctification takes away our depravity.

*Boardman.*—The Higher Christian life may be called for convenience, "second conversion." It is apprehending Christ as the way of sanctification, just as before we apprehended Christ as the way of justification. An experience, illustrated in cases of Luther, Merle D'Aubigné, Cardoso, Sir H. Havelock.

*Sermons*, on Heb. ii. 4, F. Mather, H. Constable, M.A., R. Horsfall; J. Saurin, *Sermons*, iii. p. 221; W. Reading, *Sermons*, ii. p. 554; C. Simeon, *Works*, x. p. 368; Sermon by Dean Vaughan, "Christian Life," June 4, 1884; T. Hammond, "Christian World Pulpit," October 19, 1881; Dean Farrar, C.W.P., April 12, 1883; Hugh M'Neile, "Pulpit," Vol. xxxv., No. 878; John Owen, D.D., Sermon, preached May 21, 1680. On Rom. i. 17; F. W. Robertson, Vol. i. 162 and 174; M'Cheyne, "Additional Remains," p. 431; On Heb. x. 38, Clarkson, *Works*, Vol. i. 176.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—Regard this striking sentence, "The just shall live by his faith," as original to Habakkuk, and adapted to this particular purpose by the Apostle. Examine first the original form, original associations, and original range of meaning. Bring out its entirely ethical character. It is a consolation in times of national emergency and peril to be assured that faithfulness, steadfastness, loyalty, are surely recognised by God, and must result in the defence and safety of the faithful—not from all perils, but from those particular perils.

When this is fully dealt with, an advance may be made to a second consideration. Faithfulness must have a basis, a support, and an inspiration. Where can these be found? Only in faith: only in positive reliance on God. Faithfulness implies recognition of a master, confidence in him, and dependence upon him. But these are essential elements of faith. And if we may say a

man shall live in his faithfulness, it is but reading the inmost of faithfulness to say a man shall live by his faith.

So we easily bridge over the distance between Old Testament faithfulness and New Testament faith. The one emphasises the expression, the other emphasises the root. St. Paul only sees deeper into the heart of the truth.

Then compare the prophetic with the Pauline ideas of *life*. To the prophet the supreme idea is safety, preservation from peril. To the apostle the supreme idea is entire devotement to the will of God. He only *lives* who can, in his measure, say after Christ, "My meat and my drink is to do the will of Him who sent me." It is *that* life which a man shall live who has, and maintains, a living faith in God. And nothing else but faith can possibly inspire or sustain *that* life. But it is precisely that life which is the Christian life. Impress this double form of working. A living faith maintains the higher life of righteousness, and the higher life of righteousness upholds, and ever re-invigorates, the living faith. Faith cannot but work out righteousness. Righteousness cannot but make demands that ennoble faith.

## VIII.

### BALAAAM, THE TIME-SERVER.

“Forsaking the right way, they went astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor (Bosor), who loved the hire of wrong-doing.”—  
2 PETER ii. 15.

*Germ Thoughts.*—Every life can be seen and estimated from different sides and points of view. Estimates of character are always more or less toned by the range of knowledge, the bias, and the prejudices of him who makes the estimate. It is well to keep in mind that it is almost impossible for a good man to be quite fair in his estimate of a bad man. He is too ready to treat him as wholly bad, which no man actually is. The patient student of character seeks for the twist which puts the whole life awry, the evil in disposition which, like a magnet, draws the entire life out of the straight. Balaam was not wholly bad. And he must be estimated in view of the low moral range and sentiment of his age. What was wrong, and what ultimately brought him to ruin, was this—self-interest was allowed to rule instead of duty and right. He did not say, “What ought I to do?” He only said, “What will it pay me best to do?” When a man says, “Right is what pays,” he is a time-server. As life for that man unfolds, it will reveal God checking and correcting him again and again. When

that life closes with sustained self-seeking, the close is a woe, and after the close there is the woe unspeakable.

*Scripture References.*—Numbers xxii., xxiii., xxiv., xxxi. ; Jude II.

*Notes and Suggestions.*—*Dean Stanley.*—A proof of the universality of the Old Testament is the fact that the veil is from time to time drawn aside, and other characters than those which belonged to the chosen people appear in the distance. Balaam's home is beyond the Euphrates, amongst the mountains where the streams of Mesopotamia have their rise. He was regarded throughout the whole East as a prophet, whose blessing or curse is irresistible, the rival, the possible conqueror of Moses.

From his life, Butler draws "the self-deception which persuades him in every case that the sin which he commits may be brought within the rules of conscience and revelation." Newman shows "the dark shade cast over a noble course by standing always on the ladder of advancement, and by the suspense of a worldly ambition never satisfied." Arnold points out "the combination of the purest form of religious belief, with a standard of action immeasurably below it."

Here is exhibited, in its most striking form, the irresistible force of the prophetic impulse, overpowering the baser spirit of the individual man.

*Dr. William Smith.*—Balaam is one of those who still retained the knowledge of the true God, by whom he was favoured with prophetic visions. He seems, however, to have practised the more questionable arts of divination, and to have made gain of his supernatural knowledge. A deputation waited on him with the rewards of divination, and the temptation was too great for the prophet's integrity. He hesitated, and was lost ; but not without repeated warnings. At last God gave



him his own desire, and that for many is the worst of punishments. In all that follows, we see how vainly Balaam strove to break through the prescribed limit, so that he might earn the wages of apostasy.

*George Rawlinson, M.A.*—Balaam was a man of that strangely mixed character, which from time to time passes across the stage of history, “combining the purest form of religious belief with a standard of action immeasurably below it;” anxious for worldly advancement, but unable to bring himself to overstep manifestly the restraints of law and conscience: always repining, and seeking to reconcile his private interest with the rule of right; self-deceived and gradually led on to the commission of grievous sins, from which his better nature would have shrunk, had he viewed them in their true light.

*John Farrar.*—The opinion is probably correct that he had once been a good man, and a true prophet, till, loving the wages of unrighteousness, and prostituting his office to covetousness, he apostatised from God, and betaking himself to idolatrous practices, fell under the delusion of the devil; though at the peculiar juncture referred to in the Jewish history, it might be consistent with God’s wisdom to appear to him, and over-rule his mind by the impulse of true revelations.

*Dr. Cunningham Geikie.*—Balaam an Aramaean by birth. Came from Mesopotamia. The characteristics of the inspiration granted him are identical with those of the prophets of Israel. His character has always been an enigma. No fidelity could have been more signal than that which he displays to Jehovah, when the Divine purpose to bless Israel is made known. No persuasion, or prospect of reward can move him to go with Balak’s messengers, till God permits him, and no considerations of danger or advantage make him falter in uttering the

very words he is commissioned to deliver. Yet St. Peter tells us that he held the truth in unrighteousness, and in Joshua (xiii. 22), he is called a *kosēm*—or “diviner”—a word that is only used of false prophets. It may be that although sincere in his worship of Jehovah, he joined with it too much heathen superstition, and that while afraid to go against him, he was yet only too willing in his heart to do so. In the narrative this double character may be traced.

*Sermons.*—Numbers xxiii. 10; Sherlock's Works, Vol. iii. p. 117; xxiii. 10; Sibbes' Works, Vol. vii. p. 1; xxiv. 16, 17, see Keble's “Christian Year,” p. 85. See also “Biblical Difficulties” (R. Tuck), pp. 454, 461, 477; on Num. xxii. 12, “Weekly Pulpit,” Vol. iv. p. 37. See F. W. Robertson, *Sermons*, Vol. iv. 34-42.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—Introduce by a brief sketch of Balaam's conduct. Explain that Orientals, in their wars, have their magicians with them, whose duty it is to curse their enemies, and to mutter incantations for their destruction. It is difficult to identify Balaam's home, *Pethor*, with the place in Mesopotamia, as mentioned in Deut. xxiii. 4. The journeys from Jordan side to Mesopotamia would take weeks if not months. It may be suggested that though Mesopotamia was the home of Balaam's *family*, he had migrated, and settled, for the purposes of his profession, in the districts round Moab. This suggestion greatly relieves the narrative. Explain in what sense we are to regard Balaam as a true prophet, and a prophet of God. We should keep in mind that the sin of idolatry is falsely representing the true God, using unworthy symbols to help the conception of Him. The Great Spirit is the same God all the world over. So Balaam's God was the Hebrew God. What we discern in the Hebrew race is

the authoritative apprehension of this God, and the preservation of His revelation of Himself. Balaam's gifts were right enough, and good enough; the supreme question is—did he use them aright and to right ends?

What may be effectively worked out, and illustrated in the career of Balaam, is the truth, that every man starts life with some strand of weakness in moral character; that life inevitably brings round some supreme strain times; and that many a man fails in that hour of supreme testing. In the case of Balaam we have at starting a good, honest man, who wants to do right, and stands firm to it when he knows it. But in this man from the first, we find signs of a strand of weakness. The man's supreme aim in life is success, and you feel suspicious that he would not be unwilling to *trim*, if only in that way success may be attained. He was a time-server. He meant to make the best of this world; just as Judas Iscariot did. Life is sure to bring round a time when the time-serving which, half-unconsciously, has long toned his career, has to be voluntarily chosen, or summarily dethroned. Balaam comes to a point when he must choose, and on his choice his future must depend. He knows precisely what the will of God in a certain matter is, but obedience goes directly against his worldly interests. He tries to compromise. So such men always do. But compromise is always impracticable, God brings a man right up against the question, What is *right*? There is nothing but a course downward into ruin for the man who says, 'Yes, I know what is right, but then, you see, I must do the best I can for myself.' Impress the hopeless deterioration of moral character when its weakness is thus allowed to gain wilful mastery. The time-server can only attain his ends by "losing his soul."

## IX.

### GRACE IN ADAPTATION.

“He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass.”—  
PSALM lxxii. 6.

*Germ Thoughts.*—God’s grace is always ready at the place of need, at the time of need, and in precise adaptation to the nature of need. If this be fully apprehended, the reasonableness of what may seem to be Divine delay may be clearly seen. Acting before the time may be as mischievous as failing to act at the time ; or acting after the time has passed. This is more fully true when the supreme object of him who acts is the culture of moral character. Then everything will be found to rest on precision to date, and exact adaptation to conditions. To the poetical mind, a field that has been mown is a distressful sight. Its glory is gone. It is bereft, desolate, bare, hard, uninteresting. With just that condition God deals, and wonderful signs of recovery follow his soft and beautiful showers. What times, in our human life, are represented by the newly-mown field ? And what gracious dealings of God with us are recalled to mind by the showers that quicken the life of the newly-mown grass ?

*Scripture References.*—2 Sam. xxiii. 4 ; Hosea vi. 3 ;  
Isaiah lv. 10.

*General Idea of Psalm.*—It is one of those known as Messianic. This was the opinion of the ancient Jews. *Yarchi* paraphrases the text thus:—"His word shall descend upon the people, and in their hearts, as rain that descendeth upon the tender herb of the mown meadow, which stands in need of showers after the mowing." But this seems to regard Messiah rather as an influence than as a person. We may say the text refers to the spiritual influences which Messiah will shed. In their higher moments of inspiration, poets and prophets realised that Messiah would really be a spiritual force, fresh life in humanity's life.

It is said that we have here Messiah in His peaceful character, and in Ps. cx., we have Messiah in his warlike character.

*Jennings and Lowe*, regard the psalm as composed by an unknown poet, and as having Solomon for its immediate subject. The reign of Solomon is the very reign to which such exalted hopes as are here expressed, would naturally have attached themselves. It was conspicuous above all other reigns for its peacefulness and its prosperity. The contemporary poet connects with the reign of Solomon all the Messianic hopes of the nation. The psalm is merely a prayer, not a prediction.

*John Calvin* says:—"After carefully weighing all, I incline to the view that David uttered this prayer as he was dying, and that it was put into the form of a psalm by his son, that the memory thereof might never perish. . . . But as Solomon took the argument from his father, and only clothed it in the garb of poetry, we may regard David as the principal author."

*Delitzsch* finds in the psalm the marks, both of Solomon's style, and of Solomon's time. He says,

“These promises were realised in Solomon, but only typically.”

*Dean Perowne* says:—“We have here an instance of the way in which prophecy rooted itself in the Jewish soil, how it looked first to the present and then to the future, first to the type and then to the antitype.” The part of the psalm from which the text is taken (vers. 1-7) contains the prayer that the King’s reign may be one of righteousness, peace, prosperity, and that it may endure for ever.

*Expository and Explanatory Notes.*—*Aglen.*—“Mown-grass.” The Hebrew word means “a shearing,” and is used of a fleece (Judges vi. 37; so here LXX., Vulg., and Prayer Book Version), of a hay crop (Amos vii. 1). The reference here may be either to a “mown field,” on which a shower would cause fresh grass to sprout, or to meadow grass ready for mowing. (Prayer Book Version reads, “He shall come down like the rain into a fleece of wool, even as the drops that water the earth.” Comp. Judges vi. 36-40.)

*Dean Perowne* reads as a prayer.—“Let him come down.” The gracious influence of the monarch, and of his righteous sway, is likened to the beautiful shower which freshens the withered herbage, and changes the brown, parched, bare, dusty surface, as by a touch of magic into one mass of verdure and bloom. We have the same figure in Deut. xxxii. 2; Job xxix. 22, 23; Prov. xvi. 15. The *mown* meadow is particularly mentioned, because the roots of the grass would be most exposed to the summer heat, after the crop had been gathered in, and the effect would be most striking in the shooting of the young green blade after the shower.

*Dr. Pusey* says:—“Striking image of a world, in



all appearance, hopelessly dead, but with a hidden capacity for receiving life."

*Jennings and Lowe* report a curious Targum rendering. "Upon the grass that has been cropped by locusts." This suggests a figure of extreme desolation, and magnifies the freshening effected by showers. Their paraphrase is,—“May he prove just such a blessing to the land over which he rules, as is the rain to the young grass of the meadows.”

*Science Notes.*—Meteorology, or the laws of rain, wind, atmosphere, &c. “Rain is the return to the earth in condensed drops, of the aqueous vapours which are raised in the atmosphere by the sun and the wind; the condensation being occasioned by a change in the general temperature, by a collision produced by contrary currents, or by a cloud passing into a colder stratum of air. The power of the air to hold water in solution does not increase in the same ratio with the increase of its temperature, but in a much higher ratio. Hence when two masses of air, saturated with moisture of different temperatures, are mixed, the resulting compound is not capable of holding the whole water in solution, and a part is in consequence precipitated as rain. The quantity of rain depends on a variety of circumstances, on the previous dampness of unmixed portions of the rain, on their difference of heat, on the elevation of their mean temperature; and on the extent of the combination which takes place.”

The influences of rain on the earth are pulverising the soil. Giving the moisture to pervade the whole which is necessary to vegetation. Supplying some of the necessary elements of vitality, such as ammonia, minerals, and oxygen. Quickening the germs of the seeds, and assisting in changing the starch into sugar for the supply of the young plant. Moistening the fibrils of the roots so that they may drink up nourishment. Cleansing the leaves above the soil, so that the spongioles may do their work. Contrast the effects of a gardener's watering

with the effects of rain. This will suggest the contrast between human influences and Divine influences.

*Illustrative.—Hugh Macmillan.*—How desolate a spectacle is the mown hay-field, wherein the hay-makers have done their work!—the beauty and fragrance of the wild-flower gone, nothing left but pale, sickly, yellow stubble protruding an inch or two above the soil, without grace, or form, or beauty of colour. This picture of desolation is greatly aggravated during a season of drought, when the pitiless sun scorches the shorn field; but how striking the change when the shower of rain comes. As the reviving rain continues, the hay bristles—the work of the scythe—begin to disappear, and the mown grass puts forth blade and blossom as of old, till at last an aftermath is formed, even more luxurious than was the field in its first fresh strong growth. But especially is the effect of rain upon mown grass remarkable in the arid soil and climate of Bible lands, where the sun dries up the grass more rapidly into a brown naked waste; but the rain soon restores it to life and beauty, and when the sun shines with its full refulgent glory on the reviving grass, it seems to be the smile of God made visible.

*Sarah Smiley* says:—"How I watched the rain as it fell yesterday upon my newly mown grass. Not a blade was overlooked. All around, with the utmost impartiality, each of its tiny drops stole into its place, steadily, swiftly; and as eagerly the earth received them. How green it grew with every hour of the still-falling rain! And this morning how glowing and brilliant it was in the sunrise, with every blade of grass crowned with a diamond!"

*H. C. M'Cook, D.D.*—"Gospel of Nature," p. 151. Rain is frequently used as the emblem of all that is blessed and desirable in both temporal and spiritual things. The lesson of Ps. lxxii. 6 is the manifestation of Divine power in the coming of Jesus Christ. The descending rains renovate the whole surface of the land and exercise a sovereign influence upon the vegetable kingdom; they quicken seeds to life, develop grain

and fruits, reclothe fields, vineyards, and forests, and spread blessings everywhere for the children of men. So in the vision of the prophetic psalmist should it be when Messiah should come. He would dominate the souls of men; society should be renovated; the world should bend to the yoke of His thought, from the Mediterranean to the utmost seas, and from the Euphrates to the ends of the earth, His spiritual sceptre should extend, and bless the children of men.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—The natural introduction is some account of the psalm, and some explanation of the nature of rain and its various missions in the world of creation. The suggestions of the figure in the text may form the subject of the sermon, rather than its Messianic anticipations. Take a newly mown field as a symbol of conditions in which we are sometimes found, both material and spiritual. Times when all our gathered products of life are swept away; and we are left bare as Job. Times when we have absolutely spent ourselves in service to others, and are left worn out, weary, and ill. Times, when the strain of life, like an Eastern sunshine, seems to come on us, and find us helpless to resist, because the previous discipline of life has been so severe. There are answering times in our spiritual life. Many an earnest worker knows what it is so to spend himself in giving blessings to others, that he seems to have no life left in him, he is so exhausted as to have no capacity for, and interest in, even good things. There are answering conditions in the life of Churches. Times of stubble dryness, in which the very roots seem to be burned up; and we say of such a church, "there is no help for it save in God." But there is help in God. Such conditions are of special interest to Him, because they come out of spending ourselves for Him, giving our best, as the fields give their hay, and because He knows

what possibilities are hidden in such conditions, and how abundant are His resources for quickening those possibilities into activities. No man need be in any real distress if he is only dry and bare as a stubble field that has given its beauty and wealth to the mower. And we know what God does with mown grass. He gets down to the roots of it. His grace is gentle nourishment of the springs of life. He gives the comfortable sense of His unchanging love. He renews the joys of salvation. He softens with the suasions of His grace, as the rain softens the spongioles, and the soul begins to drink again, and the tides of life begin to flow. On weary, exhausted Elijah fell the rains of a "still, small voice," and Elijah was soon his old self again for service. Of this we may be well assured, God never leaves His servants alone, when they are like mown meadows, His showers are sure to come. And they are just the thing needed. Soon there will be fresh green grass and flowers over all the field again.

## X.

### THE ELOI.

“Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani.”—MARK xv. 34.

*Germ Thoughts.*—The fact that our Lord did not make a *new* sentence for this occasion, but used an expression employed in ancient days by one of the Psalmists, reminds us that we should look for a human, rather than a superhuman, experience. We learn so much better to understand the mystery of our Redeemer's strain and suffering, when we are keen to observe His likeness to human experience, rather than His unlikeness. He is our Saviour through His humanity and, therefore, we should be very quick to recognise the likeness between His humanity and ours. We need to watch and guard against the tendency of theological dogma to make the human personality of our Lord unnatural and unreal. We gain the best and worthiest apprehensions of His deity, through worthy apprehensions of His humanity. The scene connected with the text must first be estimated as the death—the violent death, the death by the bursting or rupturing of the heart—of a real brother man.

*Scripture References.*—Psalm xxii. 1. Compare Heb. v. 7. *Perowne* says of this psalm :—“There is, perhaps, no psalm in which the sense of loneliness is so utter—none in which the peril is so imminent. . . . The

bitterness of His grief was that God—so it seemed—had forsaken Him. *Why?* Not the “why” of impatience or despair, but rather the cry of a lost child, who cannot understand why his father has left him, and who longs to see his father’s face again.” Our Lord’s word, *sabachthani*, is an Aramaic translation of the Hebrew word used in the psalm. *Eli* is the Hebrew form; *Eloi* appears to be Aramaic.

*Exegetical Notes.*—On Matt. xxvii. 46. The repetition, “My God! My God!” gives a deeply pathetic force. It is an expression of utter loneliness and desolation, the depth of which it is not for man to fathom. The repetition of the cry is a witness that even then He retained His confidence in His Father’s love. It is “*My God!*”

*Barnes* says:—“It is difficult to understand in what sense He was forsaken by God. He had done nothing to forfeit the favour of God. The expression may be used in reference to His great bodily sufferings on the cross, greatly aggravated by His previous scourging, and by the want of sympathy, and by the revilings of His enemies on the cross. A person suffering thus might address God as if He was forsaken, or given up to extreme anguish.”

*Dean Plumptre.*—The cry is recorded only by St. Matthew and St. Mark. To the Roman soldiers, to many of the bystanders, Greeks, or Hellenistic Jews, the words would be, as the sequel shows, unintelligible. Was it the natural fear of death? Or, was it the vicarious endurance of the wrath, which was the penalty of the sins of the human race? Our Lord, as man, was to taste death in all its bitterness for every man (Heb. ii. 9), and that He could not have so tasted it had His soul been throughout in full undisturbed enjoyment of the



presence of the Father. The lives of the saints of God, in proportion to their likeness to the mind of Christ, have exhibited this strange union, or, rather, instantaneous succession, of the sense of abandonment, and of intensest faith. (Compare Ps. xx. 1; Job xix. 6-9, 23-26; Jer. xx. 7-9, 12, 13.) Conceive this conflict, and the possibility of such a conflict is postulated in John xii. 27, and in the struggle of Gethsemane—and then, though we cannot understand, we may, in part at least, conceive how it was possible for the Son of Man to feel for one moment that sense of abandonment, which is the last weapon of the enemy.

*Webster and Wilkinson.*—On Mark xv. 34, 35. Goethe speaks of our Lord's mental sufferings at this time as the Divine depth of sorrow. The Son of God now entered into a mysterious sympathy with that infirmity of His creatures and brethren, which consists in the *feeling* of being *given up* to suffering and sorrow, and *apparently* left in that state by God. The difficulty of conceiving *Him* in a state of conscious abandonment, may be compared with that of conceiving Him in unconscious infancy, or in a state of progressive mental development. These mysteries of the Incarnation must remain inexplicable. They are, however, of the utmost practical value in connection with the inner and spiritual life of the believer.

*Matthew Henry.*—Christ uttered this cry with a loud voice, which indicated extremity of pain. God withdrew from Him the present comfortable sense of His complacency in Him. Although God loved Him as a Son, He frowned upon Him as a Surety. (Critical question: Does not this explanation confuse together two quite different things—feeling and fact? It is quite true that Jesus *felt* forsaken, but we must not say,

that He *was* forsaken because He *felt as if He was.*)

*Olshausen.*—In the Temptation, and in Gethsemane, we find a phenomenon which occurs in the experience of believers (see 2 Cor. xii.), in which a sudden withdrawal takes place of that higher power of the Spirit, which is an essential condition of the mind's inmost resolution. By means of this assumption only, in the case of Jesus, does the greatness of His struggle and victory appear in its full significance. Whilst a Socrates can conquer only so long as he remains in the full possession of his spirit's undiminished energy, the Redeemer triumphed over the whole power of darkness, even when forsaken by God and by the fulness of His own Spirit. To refer the abandonment to His outward sufferings, is forbidden by every profound interpretation, for the most extreme physical suffering is no abandonment of the being whose internal nature is filled with Divine energy and happiness. The immensity of the sufferings of Christ consisted in the fact that His physical torments united with the divestiture of His soul of all spiritual energy. According to Scripture, the object was two-fold. 1. The course of suffering, and the agonising withdrawal of God from Him, were necessary to render perfect the human personality of the Lord. (See Heb. ii. 10; v. 8, 9; vii. 28.) 2. But the Saviour, in His personality, at the same time completed the entire work, of which, as the Second Adam, He bore in Himself the potency (Heb. x. 14). This "perfecting of all" has a negative side—cancelling the guilt of the sinful life, reconciliation with God, forgiveness of sins. And a positive side, a participation of the principle of superior life, emancipation from the slavery of sin, the creation of the new man within us. The resurrection indicates the latter;

the death of Jesus the former. The withdrawal of God is viewed as a *hiding* only of the Divine nature, not as a removal of it.

*Neander*, "Life of Christ," p. 466.—Christ could not feel the sense of personal sin. All he could feel was a consciousness that His sufferings were the result of the sins of men, and a deep sympathy with the sufferings brought upon mankind by sin. The form of the words, "My God," implies the consciousness, in His inmost soul, of inseparable union with God. The expression must be an enigma to those who forget that Christ suffered and died for mankind—for mankind laid up in His heart. The believer, and the whole Church, must be led through all stages of suffering, and even through moments of apparent abandonment by God, to perfection and glorification.

*Notes from Sermons*.—Sibbes, Vol. i. p. 351. How Christ was *not* forsaken. 1. In regard of God's love. 2. In regard of union: no separation of His Divine and human nature, 3. In regard of grace: as if faith, or love, or any other grace, were taken from Christ. How Christ *was* forsaken. Privatively, in regard of His present comfort and joy. 4. Positively, He felt the wrath and fury of the Almighty for sin—as our surety. Christ took upon Himself whatever was penal, but not culpable.

*A. L. R. Foote*.—"Closing Scenes," p. 218. Note the time of this desertion. The ninth hour. The close of suffering; its acme. The duration of Christ's sufferings was unusually short. He died of a broken heart. Note the manner of the cry—a loud voice. Note the force of the words, *Thou* Father, forsaken *Me*, *Thy* Son. Must not this desertion have been *painful to God*. We have the Father in grief forsaking His Son, and the Son in grief forsaken by His Father; and this forsaking is for us. 1. The words do not imply, on

the part of the Father, an entire and perpetual abandonment of His Son, only the withdrawal of sensible comfort. 2. The words do not imply, on the part of the Son, any discontent or rebellion against His Father. Distinguish between complaint *to* God and complaint *against* God. God never forsakes anybody, save for one cause—sin. God never forsakes anybody in the exercise of what is called His sovereignty. Sin must have been *in* Christ, or *on* Christ. Christ was, from the cradle to the tomb, in the eye of justice and the law, a sinner, a sin-bearer, the sinner's substitute.

*Dr. George Macdonald.* — "Unspoken Sermons," First Series, p. 163. Our Lord's sufferings were awful indeed, when they began to invade the region about the will; when the struggle to keep consciously trusting in God began to sink in darkness; when the will of the man put forth its last determined effort in that cry after the vanishing vision of the Father. Never before had He been unable to see God beside Him. Yet never was God nearer Him than now. Thus the will of Jesus, in the very moment when His faith seems about to yield, is finally triumphant. Without this last trial of all the temptations of our Master had not been so full as the human cup could hold, there would have been one region through which we had to pass wherein we might call aloud upon our Captain-Brother, and there would be no voice or hearing: He had avoided the fatal spot! This is the faith of the Son of God. God withdrew, as it were, that the perfect will of the Son might arise and go forth to find the will of the Father.

*Supreme Scenes of our Lord's Life*, pp. 7, 8.—This sudden cry expresses the effect of intense bodily suffering and approaching death on a man's will. The will of our Lord was fully set, not on submission only, but on active obedience to the will of His Father. In Gethsemane the resolve had no actual bodily pain to contend with, only the anticipation of it. But at Calvary the will was borne upon by intense, overwhelming, physical pain. It had to struggle hard to hold its own. It is

most difficult for us to realise the influence of awful bodily anguish on a noble Christian spirit. Our Lord's would have been no real conflict if at times the body did not seem to get a moment's victory. The desertion cry expresses such a moment, when intense pain seemed to force the will aside, and darken the soul with a moment's shade. It is a cry of feeling after God, and clinging to Him, even when agony so blinds the soul eyes that He cannot be seen. Is it possible for us to imagine what the act of dying is in its effects on the will? The ninth hour was our Lord's dying hour; the desertion-cry was His dying cry. And what is dying when it comes to a man in full health? No mere falling asleep and passing away, but the soul in some awful way seeming to drop down, losing everything, light, breath, God, all; passing under, and feeling, in that moment, to be left in utter desolation. If we could know all that means we should begin to understand the mysterious desertion-cry that burst forth just as the whelming waters rolled over His head. Darkness glazed His eyes; He could not see. Dimness dulled His ears: He could not hear. His will, too, seemed as if fading from its power; and ere the waters quite closed over, there came the great cry, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" So have we seen the dying man, when sight is gone, put out his hand and feel for his friend's hand, and grasp it with a convulsive clutch, as if he feared he was forsaken and must hold on to the last. But even in the supreme moment of His death our Lord's faith was mightier than His fear, for He did not cry, "O God," but "*My God, my God!*"

*Illustration.*—Fox, "Book of Martyrs." Dr. Humbert, in Queen Mary's time, being fastened to the stake to be burnt, put up this short prayer: "Son of God, shine upon me!" Immediately the sun in the firmament shone out of a dark cloud, so full in his face, that he was forced to look another way. And this was very comfortable to him.

*Sermons in Library.*—M'Cheyne, "Ad. Rem.," p. 183  
T. Manton, D.D., *Sermons* (1678), p. 157; John Flavel,



Works, Vol. i. p. 406; Shank's "Sacramental Sermons," p. 89; W. Barrow, Sermons, Vol. i. p. 189.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—The hiding of the face of God from Christ, which was the deepest element of woe to Christ—though it was a matter of feeling rather than of fact—may be regarded as the greatest proof of God's acceptance. God would not have hidden His face thus from any other sacrifice. It was that very hiding which showed that God was joining with Christ in accomplishing man's redemption.

Christ's whole life was a giving up, till He gave Himself up at death. So Christian life is God calling us to give up thing after thing—hopes, plans, friends; and then at last to give ourselves wholly up at death. Yet, when the Christian knows the highest giving up, he knows the highest triumph, as his Lord did.

There is a culminating point in every pleasure and in every woe. This—ninth-hour cry—is the culminating point of the scene of Calvary. Some things made the Calvary scene peculiarly solemn. 1. Such an end for such a life. 2. The mystery of the person suffering. 3. The innocence of the victim. The cry is the highest point of the self-sacrifice. Christ's giving up advanced even to giving up the Father's smile. This cry of Christ throws light on four great mysteries. 1. The mystery of suffering. Highest suffering is immaterial. It is the suffering of the soul. 2. The mystery of sin. Its quality is shown by its effects. It separates between the soul and God. God never forsakes but for sin. Sin is a forsaking of God, and this may—as discipline or punishment—lead to God's forsaking the soul. 3. The mystery of sin's penalty. The "soul that sinneth it shall die." And the death of a soul is God's hiding from it. 4. The



mystery of sin-bearing. He takes up sin on himself who sets himself to deal with its results and mischievous influences. We bear disease when we try to heal it. We bear other people's burdens when we help to remove them. Our Lord bore our sin when He dealt with it as our Saviour.

## XI.

### THE SAFETY OF REPENTANCE.

“I tell ye, Nay : but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

—LUKE xiii. 5.

*Germ Thoughts.*—To properly understand the abrupt, sententious, suggestive sentences of any original public teacher, it is necessary to estimate carefully the circumstances under which he speaks, and the persons to whom he speaks. On this occasion our Lord was not addressing His disciples but the Jewish people—“the multitude.” Now they were patriotic unto fanaticism. They were ever ready to rise in rebellion against the Roman power that held the nation in bondage. But they did not see, what our Lord saw, that their national sins had brought this disaster, and was keeping it on them ; and, moreover, that they were consummating their national sin, by a national rejection of the Messiah which their God had sent them, and that consequently there was awaiting them a final national destruction. Some of them complained to Him that the Roman Pilate had killed some Galileans while engaged in sacrifice. Our Lord answered their complaint by turning their thoughts in upon themselves. That little judgment on unrepented sins was but a prophecy of a judgment, at the hands of the Romans, in which all who did not repent would share. (Remember that, in the great Roman siege, the Christians

found shelter at Pella.) What then is the national repentance which alone can safeguard a nation? Illustrate by the case of Nineveh, and notice the *national* character of the preaching of John the Baptist.

Public calamities are intended to impress private danger and private duty. Danger for the perishing, which seems so terrible when overwhelming *others*, is the image of a more serious danger to which we are all exposed. And as that individual danger has a moral origin, it is only to be averted by a moral renovation "Repent." Show the importance of public calamities in the Divine administration, especially as vindicating God's Providence, in times when there is set forth, so prominently, human power to modify and control natural laws.

*Scripture References.*—Illustrations of True Repentance—Israelites: Judges x. 15, 16; David, 2 Sam. xii. 13; Manasseh, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12; Job xlii. 6; Nineveh, Jonah iii. 5-8; Matt. xii. 41; Peter, Matt. xxvi. 75; Zaccheus, Luke xix. 8; Thief on Cross, Luke xxiii. 40, 41; Corinthians, 2 Cor. vii. 9; and see Luke xv. 18-21; xviii. 13. False Repentance: Saul, 1 Sam. xv. 24-30; Ahab, 1 Kings xxi. 27-29; Judas, Matt. xxvii. 3-5. Scripture passages showing that repentance should be attended by—1. Humility, 2 Chron. vii. 14; James iv. 9, 10. 2. Shame and Confusion of Face, Ezra ix. 6-15; Jer. xxxi. 19; Ezek. xvi. 61, 63; Dan. ix. 7, 8. 3. Confession, Lev. xxvi. 40; Job xxxiii. 27. 4. Conversion, Acts iii. 19; xxvi. 20. 5. Turning from sin, 2 Chron. vi. 26.

*Exegetical and Explanatory Notes.*—*Webster and Wilkinson.*—Galilæans; perhaps the zealots who were followers of Judas of Galilee. See Acts v. 37. Judas appeared A.D. 14, the last year of the reign of Augustus.

Our Lord, from His prolonged residence in Galilee, might be suspected of favouring this party. From Josephus we learn that the Galileans were very troublesome to their rulers, and that there were frequent disturbances at the festivals. Our Lord in depreciating the common notion that such calamities were to be regarded as direct and particular judgments, predicts the occurrence of similiar calamities, as judgments on the people for general impenitence. Hence we may deduce the rule that calamity, which is not the immediate effect of sin, is not to be considered as judgment, save in the cases in which it is specially threatened as such. There is an immediate allusion to the coming final destruction of the Jewish nation—as a nation—by the Romans.

*Critical Commentary.*—About this time the party of Judas would be at its height, and if Pilate caused this detachment of them to be waylaid and put to death as they were offering their sacrifices at one of the festivals, that would be “mingling their blood with their sacrifices.”

*Barnes.*—From this account of the Galileans we may learn—1. That men are very prone to infer, when any great calamity happens to others, that they are peculiarly guilty. So reasoned Job’s friends. 2. That conclusion is erroneous in the way in which it is usually drawn. 3. This is not a world of retribution. 4. There is another world—a future state—where the good shall be happy and the wicked punished. 5. When men are disposed to speak about the great guilt of others, and the calamities that come upon them, they should inquire about *themselves*.

*Dean Plumptre.*—The tale had probably been told with a conviction expressed or implied, that the massacre had been a special judgment for some special and exceptional guilt. Our Lord at once, here as in John ix. 7,

sweeps away all their rash interpretations of the Divine government, and declares that all, unless they repented, were under the sentence of a like destruction. The "likewise," however, is hardly to be taken, as some have taken it, in a literal sense. *Some* who heard these words may have perished by the sword of Titus.

*Olshausen.*—It is true that suffering is the punishment of sin. Error lies in this, that sin and punishment are not so distributed here below, that each instance of suffering on the part of an individual must be punishment for his own sin. Hence from suffering we cannot infer the sin of individuals, only the sin of the whole body. And hence Christ endeavours to awaken in all the consciousness of guilt. True repentance is the consciousness of our need of atonement, and forms, consequently, an indispensable requisite to our receiving those higher powers of life for the overthrow of sin, which Jesus came to bring into the world. The only way to escape such punishment here or elsewhere is through repentance (*metanoia*), which must bear reference not only to actual sins (*peccata actualia*), but also and above all to habits of sin (*habitus peccandi*).

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—The title given to this study reminds us that the subject proposed is not the connection of sin and suffering, nor the nature of repentance ; but the *safety* of repentance. In what sense would it secure safety ; and what is the value of the safety which it secures. This is a subject of great difficulty, and needing very precise and careful thinking. In any worthy sense of the word "*save*," repentance never saved anybody, and it can save nobody. It may save a nation from some particular national calamity as it saved Nineveh. But it did very little for the Ninevites. It was no permanent deliverance from the power

of their old sins. This comes out more clearly when the word is used in relation to the individual. If a man has committed some crime, and judgment is impending, mercy may remit the sentence on the man's repentance. But there is no general and permanent change in the man. For the occasion repentance puts a man in right relations with God. But the *act* of repentance must become a *state* of repentance, if the relations are to be made permanent. Repentance is an absolutely necessary beginning, but it is no more than a beginning. This needs to be very firmly stated, very fully illustrated, and very vigorously impressed, because so many have the impression that repentance suffices, and repentance saves. Whereas it can do no more than put a man into a salvable state, and hopeful relations. Repentance is so absolutely necessary, because it alone will break down the barriers that block the way of Christ in dealing savingly with the soul. It is Christ's work in the opened, penitent soul that alone can save. Let repentance stand alone, let it follow on to nothing further and better, and it will be sure to fade out of the soul. It belonged exclusively to a rousing occasion, and to a rousing influence, and passes when these are removed, leaving the soul unsaved. There is safety from threatened judgment in repentance, so it may be the duty of the hour. There is no salvation in repentance. There is a hopeful beginning of salvation, if the humbled penitent look up to God in faith and prayer, and with the penitence for *a* sin, there is a due sense of the *sinfulness* out of which the sin has come. Then there is a sphere ready in which the living Lord Jesus can do—and in that sphere He will surely do—His saving work. Then repent; but do not stop at repentance.



## XII.

### THE TWO MARYS.

“And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.”—MATTHEW xxvii. 61.

*Germ Thoughts.*—Here are two women. Different in person, disposition, history, associations, and experiences. Yet we find them together. They are one—of one mind—in regard to something. One in their love to Christ. One in their distress at His loss. One in the undefined expectation or hope concerning Him. They can quicken each other's memories of Him whom they both thankfully and trustfully love. They can at once intensify and assuage each other's grief. They can watch together, and help each other to build “airy castles” of what might yet be, spite of all the darkness and the death. In their deep hearts they knew His power. He was mightier than devils and death. He might prove to be mightier than the death which now held Himself. We can imagine and set forth the varied feelings of those two watching women, “sitting over against the sepulchre.”

It is possible to find a helpful sermon to *Young Women* suggested by this text. Connect with it the idea, that women loved and honoured Christ, and that Christ loved and honoured women. The Gospel brings special

blessings to woman. If we find that Christianity, as a scheme, elevates the condition of the female sex, may we not reasonably expect that Christ, when here as the Saviour, would bless and elevate and honour individual women. Note that women have specially to do with us at the beginnings and endings of our human lives. They preside over our birth and infancy, and over our last illness and death. Three reasons why women should rejoice in the salvation of Jesus. 1. In the Gospel agency alone is to be found the development of those graces that are peculiar to women. 2. The nature of the influence which women can exert, and the work women have to do. It is Christlike influence, and Christlike work, and in these things they have the example and the sympathy of Christ. 3. They need the salvation and grace of Christ, because of the peculiar forms of danger to which they are exposed. Christ must always be much to woman, who was "last at His Cross and first at His tomb."

*Scripture References.* — Mary Magdalene — Matt. xxvii. 56, 61 ; xxviii. 1 ; Mark xv. 40 ; xvi. 1, 9 ; Luke xxiv. 10 ; John xix. 25 ; xx. 1, 18. Mary of Bethany — Luke x. 39, 42 ; John xi. 1, and on xii. 3. For difficulty of identifying the *other* Mary, compare Mark xvi. 1 and John xix. 25. Apparently there are three Marys mentioned. Mary, the sister of Lazarus ; Mary, the wife of Cleophas ; and Mary, the mother of James (which James is not stated). But these three might quite easily be the same person. See Mark xv. 47.

*Explanatory Notes.*—*Dean Plumptre.*—The words of the text imply that the women remained by the Cross while the body was taken down, and watched its entombment ; then returning to the house where they lodged, they prepared their spices and ointments before the

Sabbath began, for a more complete embalmment, so that they might be ready at the earliest hour of the dawn on the first day of the week.

As Mary of Magdala is the prominent woman, and the other is almost unknown, attention may be fixed on her personality, and her history. Dean Farrar says: "An ancient tradition—especially prevalent in the Western Church, and followed by the translators of our English version—a tradition which, though it must ever remain uncertain, is not in itself improbable, and cannot be disproved—identifies (the sinning woman who washed Jesus' feet with her tears in the house of the Pharisee) with Mary of Magdala, 'out of whom Jesus cast seven devils.' This exorcism is not elsewhere alluded to, and it would be perfectly in accordance with the genius of Hebrew phraseology if the expression had been applied to her, in consequence of a passionate nature, and an abandoned life. The Talmudists have much to say respecting her—her wealth, her extreme beauty, her braided locks, her shameless profligacy, &c.; but all that we really know of the Magdalene from Scripture is that enthusiasm of devotion and gratitude which attached her, heart and soul, to her Saviour's service. She is mentioned as first among the women who accompanied Jesus in His wanderings, and ministered to Him of their substance."

*Dr. Edersheim* repudiates the idea that Magdalene can mean "curler of hair." He points out that Magdala, a Sabbath day's journey from Tiberias, was celebrated for its dye-works, and its manufactories of fine woollen textures, of which eighty are mentioned. Its moral corruption was great, and to this the Rabbis attributed its final destruction. So we may realise "the home, and with it, perhaps, also the upbringing and circumstances

of her who not only ministered to Jesus in His life, but, with eager avarice of love, watched "afar off" His dying moments, and then sat over against the new tomb of Joseph in which His body was laid."

*Dr. Hanna.*—"Nicodemus, Joseph, and the rest are gone; but there, while the sun goes down, and the evening shadows deepen around, the very solitude and gloom of the place such as might have warned them away—there are Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to be seen sitting over against the sepulchre, unable to tear themselves from the spot, gazing through their tears at the place where the body of their Lord was laid."

*Sermon Notes.*—John Angel James, "Sermons to Young Women." Christianity elevates the condition of women by its genius as a system of universal equity and benevolence. The incarnation of Christ elevates the dignity of the sex, as He was "born of woman." His personal conduct during His mission revealed His respect for woman. Christianity abolished polygamy (not by any command, but by its moral influence, its culture of self-restraint, and its law of injuring none but serving all). Christianity jealously guards the sanctity of the marriage-tie. Christianity admits women to equal participation of religious blessing. Christianity invites and employs the energies and influence of women in extending its sway. As to "woman's mission," Mr. James thinks woman was intended to occupy a position of subordination and dependence. Her proper sphere is the *home*. For this sphere she is specially adapted by—1. Her consciousness of subordination. 2. Her gentleness as a sort of passive power. 3. Her tenderness (viewed as disposition). 4. Her self-denial. 5. Her fortitude (picture of Christ's mother at the cross). 6. Her love (woman's is more disinterested and simple than man's). The following are among the motives and persuasions to early piety having peculiar force on the female sex:—1. "Your quick sensibility, your soft nature, your tender heart, your great

imaginativeness render you peculiarly susceptible of pious influences. 2. Your sex is less exposed to varied temptation, and it has more leisure at command."

*Dr. Horace Bushnell*, "New Life," pp. 280 and on.—"The efficiency of the passive graces." The passive elements or graces of the Christian life, well maintained, are quite as efficient and fruitful as the active. By "passive elements" we mean such graces as meekness, gentleness, forbearance, forgiveness, the endurance of wrong without resentment or anger, contentment, quietness, peace, and unambitious love. We are unduly impressed with the idea that power is measured by exertion. 1. Passive and submissive virtues are most out of the reach of those who have not the true Christian spirit. 2. What an immense power of principle is needed to establish the soul in these virtues of patience! Illustration—Napoleon, mighty in work; at St. Helena he could not be patient. The restlessness of Socrates. 3. It is chiefly by this *endurance* of evil that Christ, as Redeemer, prevails against sin of heart, and subdues its enmity. 4. Men, under sin, are set against *active* efforts to turn them, but not against that which implies no effort—viz., the gentle virtues of patience. 5. Refer to your own consciousness for power of passive graces. Lessons—(1.) Here Christianity makes issue with the whole world on the question of human greatness (the world's idea is active power). (2.) The office of the Christian martyrs is hereby explained. (3.) We see how it is many are so abundantly active in religion, with so little effect, and the converse. (4.) We see the reason why we have so many crosses, trials, wrongs, and pains. We need a continual discipline, and such discipline alone nourishes passive graces. Pre-eminently the office and power of *woman*. "Her power is to be the power more especially of gentleness and patient endurance. An office so Divine let her joyfully accept and patiently bear, adding sweetness to life in all its exasperating and bitter experiences, causing poverty to smile, cheering the hard lot of adversity, teaching pain the way of peace, abating hostilities and disarming injuries by the patience

of her love. All the manifold conditions of human suffering and sorrow are so many occasions given to woman to prove the sublimity of true submission, and reveal the celestial power of passive goodness." "Christ commands you to take up His cross and follow Him, not that He may humble you, or lay some penance on you, but that you may surrender the low self-will, and the feeble pride of your sin, and ascend to the sublime patience of heavenly charity. You begin to reign the moment you begin to suffer well."

*Sermons in Library.*—Drake, W., "Patient Waiting on Affliction." Watson, A., *Sermons*, Second Series, Vol. ii. p. 81. Stretton, H., "The Grave of Christ a Type of the Church's Struggles." "Acts of St. Mary Magdalene," p. 163.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—Note the modern identification of Calvary with the "Mound of the Skull," a hillock near Jerusalem, that has been so named because, from one point of view, certain old tombs make it present the appearance of a human skull. On one side of this mound there are still gardens, with rock-tombs in them, one of which some incline to identify as the tomb in which the body of Jesus was laid. These patient, watching women must have had a very real and very deep love for Christ. That love came partly out of what Christ had done for them, and partly out of what they had done for Christ. That love so influenced them that it gave beauty and strength to their characters. You cannot keep back the feeling that they are, in a way, model women. The entire explanation of their conduct is the intensity of that love to Christ, which wholly ruled their life and thought. The subject suggested is this,—A personal and living interest in Christ can alone—1. Clothe woman with her true beauty. A woman's beauty is gentleness, self-denial, fortitude, patience, and love. 2. Strengthen woman for her true



work. Her sphere is the home. Her work is the culture of the submissive side of character, in all those who come within her influence. And her supreme power is her personal example. Woman may share with man in training intellect. She has a unique place—in which she is unrivalled—in the training of character.

3. Keep woman from her peculiar danger. From the overstrength of affection, which easily becomes imperilling passion. From her ignorance of the world, yet love of show. From the fretfulness induced by the petty cares and anxieties of life. From the special danger of unguardedness in conduct, which exposes to the power of the moral wrong-doer. Supreme love to Christ is a high hedge of sweetest purity, which is a perfect safeguard for young souls, while it is kept intact, while it is *first love*.

### XIII.

#### THE REASONABLENESS OF MAKING LIFE A SACRIFICE.

“That ye present your bodies a living sacrifice.”—ROMANS xii. 1.

*Germ Thoughts.*—Throughout this epistle Paul's dominant thought is that, before their conversion, the Roman Christians, in common with their fellow-countrymen, had been devoting their *bodies* to sensualism and self-indulgence. He pleads for a devotement of their *bodies* to the service of God in righteousness. A life may be a sacrifice. The old sacrifice involved the *taking* of life; the new Christian sacrifice involves the *using* of life.

*Scripture References.*—Psalm l. 13, 14; Rom. vi. 13, 16, 19; 1 Cor. vi. 13, 20.

*Various Renderings.*—The words, “reasonable service,” De Wette and Meyer give thus, “Moral and spiritual worshipping of God;” and Jowett gives, “A ceremonial of thought and mind.” The margin of Revised Version gives as alternatives, for “acceptable,” “well-pleasing;” for “reasonable,” “spiritual”; and for “service,” “worship.”

*Exegesis.*—“Therefore,” marks the completion of the argument, and the beginning of the application. “Present,” a sacrificial term signifying complete resignation and readiness—a continuous condition of mind and

feeling. Mark the force of the aorist. "Bodies," viewed as the soul's instrument of service. The very part of you which is apt to be "an occasion of falling." "Reasonable service," means a service of the reason; a service rendered by the reason. An intelligent self-dedication.

*Notes.—Webster and Wilkinson.*—Appropriate result of previous argument is that consecration of the whole life with which all holiness commences. "By the mercies," or compassions, of God. See that in chap. xi. *eleos, chrestotes, kharis, katallage, ekloge, soteria*, are summed up in vers. 33-36. The grateful sense which the believer has of pardon and grace, and his sure hope of eternal life, tend to secure his consecration to God.

"Your bodies," as in the former state instruments of unrighteousness, now of righteousness. As exponents of the old nature, which was crucified with Christ. As members of Christ and temples of the Holy Ghost. "Living sacrifice," in contrast with dead victims under the law (1 Peter ii. 5). The devotion of animals free from blemish under the old covenant, is the type of personal consecration under the new.

(This is not quite the point. The essence of an Old Testament sacrifice was not offering a dead body, but surrendering, and taking, and giving, the creature's life.—ED.)

"Reasonable service," that which is mental, in contrast with the merely external; the spiritual in opposition to the carnal.

*Critical Commentary.*—"Your bodies," yourselves in the body, considered as the organ of the inner life. Through the body all the gracious principles and affections of believers reveal themselves in the outward life.

*Howard Hinton.*—Apostle has in mind a reference to Jewish ritual. Christian consecration is of a nobler kind. 1. Consisting of themselves, not an animal. 2. Being a living sacrifice, not a slain one. 3. A morally holy sacrifice, not merely ceremonially holy. 4. An eminently acceptable one. 5. An intelligent, and not merely a ritual one.

*St. Chrysostom.*—"Living sacrifice." How is the body to become a sacrifice? Let thine eye look upon no evil thing, and it hath become a sacrifice; let thy tongue speak nothing filthy, and it hath become an offering; let thy hand do no lawless deed, and it hath become a whole burnt-offering. But this is not enough, we must do good works also; let the hand do alms, the mouth bless them that despitefully use us, and the ear find leisure evermore for the hearing of Scripture. For sacrifice can be made only of that which is clean; sacrifice is a first-fruit of other actions. Let us, then, from our hands, and feet, and mouth, and all our other members, yield a first-fruit unto God.

*W. Sanday, M.A., D.D.*—The idea contained in sacrifice is that of dedication. We are to *dedicate* our bodies to God. But there is to be this distinction between the old Jewish sacrifices and the Christian sacrifice—the one was of dead animals, the other of the living man. The worshipper must offer, or present before God, *himself*, with all his energies and powers directed consciously to God's service.

*John Howe.*—Sacrifice here signifies whatsoever is by God's own appointment, dedicated to Himself. Allusion to old sacrifices. Anything dead of itself may not be eaten, or presented to God; it must be brought alive. The animal brought alive was to be slain in sacrificing. We are to continue to live as sacrifices.

Illustrate by Samuel. Bodily life is but alluded to, the spiritual, Divine life, is meant. "Yield yourselves . . . as those alive from the dead." Alive by a life which means God, aims at Him, terminates in Him, and is derived to you through Christ. Dedication of ourselves to God is not donation, in the strict and proper sense, such as confers right upon the donee; it is properly a surrender, or delivery of ourselves upon the acknowledgment of God's former right; only a consent and obedience to His rightful claim. Dedication must be done—1, With knowledge and understanding; 2, with serious consideration; 3, with a determinate judgment that this ought to be done; 4, with liberty of spirit; 5, with a plenary, full bent of heart and will; 6, with a concomitant acceptance of God; 7, with an explicit reference to Jesus Christ; 8, with a deep humility and abasement of ourselves (Howe's Works, Vol. iv. p. 5).

*Sermons.* — Aitken, Sermons, p. 97; Maclaren, "Year's Ministry," Vol. i. p. 315; Bailhache, Sermons, p. 81.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—Dwell upon the primary and essential nature of sacrifice as a *gift to God*. This is the essence of the first sacrifices of Cain and Abel. God taught that the gift of *life* was more acceptable to Him than the gift of *things*; but we are not to understand that He refused the gift of things. But God would teach that even more acceptable to Him was the gift of the highest and best life, and that is the *life of man*. This is taught in the devotement of Samuel's life to God; in the demand prophets made, that those who offered sacrifices should *give themselves* in their gift; and in the perfectly surrendered and obedient life of the Lord Jesus.

I. The sin of man is sacrificing—giving—his body to

himself. He uses it for his own ends of self-indulgence, self-service. See what moral degradation this has led to. Illustrate Roman, pagan, immorality. This sin is universal, but takes subtle forms.

II. The redemption of man is sacrificing—giving—his body to God. The beginning of it is the surrender of the will. If we stop with that ours is not a “whole” sacrifice. Paul saw that danger in the Roman Christians, so he claims the “body for the Lord.” The body includes a physical, mental, and emotional sphere. He claims all for God. The body comes into relations with things and with persons. He claims the toning of all with righteousness. Impress the sublime meaning of life as the securing of the whole bodily force, and that permanently, as a living sacrifice unto God.



## XIV.

### APOSTLE AND PRIEST.

“Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.”  
—HEBREWS iii. 1.

*Germ Thoughts.*—We should keep in mind that the dominant purpose of this epistle is, so to magnify Christ, that the faith, love, and obedience of the Jewish converts might be restfully centred in Him, and they might thus be relieved of anxiety concerning those old claims which Mosaic law and ritual had upon them. The author finds terms which would be effective for his purpose on Christian Jewish minds. The association of the terms Apostle and High Priest with Jesus may be thus explained. The chief man, or ruler, of the synagogue, was called by the Jews an Apostle. The chief man, or ruler (especially in Maccabean times) of the Temple was called the High Priest. It is therefore the supreme place of Christ as Ruler in the Christian Church which we are to *consider*. That supreme ruling covers and includes both the legislative and the administrative functions.

*Scripture References.*—Romans xv. 8. “Jesus Christ was a *minister*. Compare Luke iv. 20. “Gave it again to the *minister*,” of the synagogue. Hebrews ii. 17; iv. 14; v. 5; vi. 20; viii. 1; ix. 11; x. 21.

*Various Renderings.*—Read, “of our Christian confession,  
80

faith ;" that is, "whom we confess." The Revised Version reads, "of *a* heavenly calling." And also, "of our confession, even Jesus."

*Exegetical Notes.*—It is unfortunate that there should be a division of chapters just here, because chap. iii. I really impresses and applies what has been unfolded and argued in chapters i. and ii.

*Dean Farrar* says of ver. 1 : "It is an inference from the grandeur of Christ's position, and the blessedness of His work as set forth in the previous chapters. It does not appear that St. Paul elsewhere calls converts, 'holy brethren.' The word 'consider' simply means, 'fix close attention. It assumes that the matter both demands and deserves this close attention.' Christ is called an Apostle as being 'sent forth' from the Father (John xx. 21). The same title is used of Christ by Justin Martyr." We incline to criticise this note of Dean Farrar's. It rests on the notion that a Bible writer's meaning, in the use of a term, must be decided by the dictionary. It is much more hopeful to ask the colloquial or special use of the term, at the time of writing. Jews would attach a well-recognised meaning to the term "Apostle." They would at once think of the "minister of their synagogue." And so with the term "High Priest" as used in this epistle. It is not the old Aaronic idea of a High Priest—not the sacrificing High Priest—that could have been in this author's mind. It must have been the High Priest of the Maccabean age, who was the head of the State, the real ruler of the people. Such, in our Lord's time, and in the Apostle's time, the patriotic Jews still considered their High Priest to be. This author adapts himself to the notions of those to whom he writes, and thinking along his line we shall best get at his meaning. It is certainly remarkable

that in Philo the Logos is called "the great High Priest of our confession." (But the clause is a doubtful one.) The best MSS. leave out the name Christ, and retain Jesus only.

*Preachers' Homiletic Commentary.* — "Wherefore," lit., "whence." Allowing what has been said of Christ to be true, there is ground for fixing further, and even closer, attention upon Christ. By "heavenly calling," understand the privileges of the new dispensation. "Heavenly" may be taken as equivalent to "spiritual," and as contrasted with the *material* features of the Jewish calling. The writer calls on these Jewish Christians to "consider" the person, and official place of Jesus in the spiritual dispensation, because they would thus be preserved from any temptation to return upon the older system. (And precisely this was their temptation.)

*Liddell and Scott's Dictionary.* — "Apostolos" means messenger, ambassador, envoy. "Stolos" means a squadron fitted out ready for sea. Derivation — "Apostello," to send away on a mission, or service (chiefly of ships).

*Robinson.* — On New Testament use of "Apostolos."  
1. Generally, a messenger, John xiii. 16; Phil. ii. 25.  
2. Messengers and ambassadors sent from God. Joined with "prophetai," Luke xi. 49; Eph. iii. 5; Rev. ii. 2; xviii. 20.  
3. Specially applied to twelve disciples of Christ, and then to St. Paul; and then, in a wider sense, to the helpers of the twelve, in their work of gathering churches, 2 Cor. viii. 23.

*Moses Stuart.* — "Brethren" (adelphoi), as applied to Christians, means one of the same faith or profession; with the adjunct of possessing a friendly brotherly feeling. "Holy," in Jewish idea, separated from, and consecrated to. Jewish priests were not necessarily

personally holy men. "Heavenly," either as of a celestial nature ; or, the calling is given from heaven, or by one who comes from heaven. The Jews applied the word "Apostle" to the minister of the synagogue—that is, the person who presided over it. Perhaps "Apostolos" is used in the Jewish sense here ; the writer is just about to speak of Christ and Moses as presiding over, and administering the affairs of, the "house" (oikos) respectively committed to them.

*Webster and Wilkinson.*—For "holy brethren," compare Col. i. 2. "Saints and faithful brethren," 1 Thess. v. 27. "Holy brethren," but good MSS. omit the word "holy." "Calling"—a call from heaven to partake of blessings more spiritual and sublime in nature than the law offered. By "calling," understand a state or condition considered as due to the act of God. By "profession," or "confession," understand a state or condition considered as due to our own act. "Our profession" may mean—our faith, the Christian religion, our state, position, and character, assumed and acknowledged by ourselves with respect to Him.

*Sermons.*—*Dr. A. Maclaren* on "Consider Christ." I.—One great comprehensive demand—Consider Christ. Implied in the word "Consider." 1. That the occupation of mind must be the result of conscious effort. 2. It must be the look of eager interest. 3. It must be steady or continuous. II.—The great aspects of Christ's work, which should fix our gaze. As Apostle and as High Priest, the Apostolate and the Priesthood are to be included in the one word, Mediator. III.—The great reasons for this occupation of mind and heart with Christ our Mediator. 1. Our relation to Christ, and the benefit we derive from it. 2. The calling of which we are partakers. 3. The avowal which we have made concerning Him.

*Sermons in Library.*—M'Cheyne's Life, p. 303. C. Simeon's "Names and Offices of Christ." Works, Vol. xix. p. 179. Chevallier's Hulsean Lecture (1826), p. 302. S. Hopkins, D.D., "Importance and Necessity of Considering the Exalted Character of Christ." Works, iii. p. 499.

*Illustration.*—*The Moral Influence of a Leader.*—There is a touching fact related in the history of a Highland chief, of the noble house of MacGregor, who fell wounded by two balls at the battle of Prestonpans. Seeing their chief fall, the clan wavered and gave the enemy an advantage. The old chieftain, beholding the effects of the disaster, raised himself up on his elbow, while the blood gushed in streams from his wounds, and cried aloud, "I am not dead, my children; I am looking at you to see you do your duty." These words revived the sinking courage of the brave Highlanders. There was a charm in the fact that they still fought under the eye of their chief. It roused them to put forth their mightiest energies, and they did all that human strength could do to turn and stem the dreadful tide of battle.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—If a word seems necessary concerning the authorship of the Epistle, observe that the Pauline authorship has always been regarded as uncertain. It is Pauline in spirit, but too formal and rhetorical for Paul himself to have composed it. We look for an intimate disciple of Paul's. One who was in a very marked way influenced by him, and yet was individual enough to put his own impress on his work. The most recent workers on the problem are—Dale, who thinks as much can be said for, as can be said against, the Pauline authorship; Plumptre, who pleads for the authorship of Apollos, and brings out some remarkable similarities of word, thought, and style between this Epistle and a work admitted to have been written by Apollos; Harnack, who broaches the theory that the

Epistle, or Treatise, was written by Priscilla, the wife of Aquila, a prominent teacher in the Pauline school.

It will be wise to give a sketch of the contents of Chapters i. and ii., especially to bring out that the one point of supreme interest to the author is the dignity of Christ, and the nature of the work He undertook, for which a human experience, including suffering and death, was absolutely necessary. Keep in mind that the "shame of the cross" was an altogether more serious thing in Pauline times than it is now. It was stumbling-block and foolishness to Jew and Greek. The shame had to be got over. It is, by showing that the dignity and mission of Christ altogether overshadow it, and even glorify it. Note that all the New Testament writers lead us on to apprehend Christ as belonging to a new—even the spiritual order of beings. His mission, too, belongs to that order.

Point out that the claim for precise and careful *consideration* of the things said about Christ was quite reasonable, because they were surprising things, and likely to arouse opposition. Any way, they were very difficult to receive. Show that the demand is still reasonable, for the higher and more spiritual views of our Lord's person and mission, which are His gracious revelation to devout souls *to-day*, are difficult, and call for the putting away of prejudice, and the awakening of sensitiveness to spiritual realities. Those higher views deal with Christ as, in a spiritual sense, living, *presiding over*, sanctifying and *ruling* His Church. In calling Him Apostle and Priest, His living rule, His absolute authority, His active government, His positive, present relations, are suggested. He is the Apostle of our synagogue, if we think of the Church as a synagogue.



He is the Maccabean High Priest, if we think of the Church as an elect nation.

Two points of His present rule need to be elaborated and illustrated. The first—His legislative right—will be admitted, until it is seen to involve His *fresh legislation* to meet varying circumstances. The second—His administrative, or executive rights—will need careful treatment. It should be shown that He has never given over His executive rights to any commission, but still actually rules His Church, administering His own laws.

## XV.

### THE DEATHLESS CHRIST.

“Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more ; death hath no more dominion over Him.”—ROMANS vi. 9.

*Germ Thoughts.*—The subject may be stated as the historical and doctrinal peculiarities of our Lord’s resurrection. It is manifest that when contrasted with all other resurrections from the dead, we can find in our Lord’s resurrection some very strongly marked peculiarities. Now all recorded resurrections are embodiments and illustrations of doctrinal truths. As our Lord’s resurrection stands out distinct from all others, we may reasonably expect that the doctrinal bearings of it will be unique and peculiar too. In the historical contrast, notice these things. Christ’s resurrection followed on a death of violence. Then it bore relation to human sin. Christ’s resurrection was effected through the agency of no human being. Then it declared Christ’s essential nature; the Divine was in Him. Christ’s resurrection was to no mere renewal of earthly life. Then it revealed the spiritual sphere in which redemption operates. Christ’s resurrection was to the deathless life. Then no limitations check, on His side, the beneficent operations of His grace. In sermon lead up to these last two points, and fully unfold them. What is life that knows no death, that cannot be affected by death? Find *that* life, and

you know what the risen life of Jesus *was*, and what the present life of Jesus *is*.

*Scripture References.*—Rev. i. 18; Heb. ix. 27, 28; Luke xx. 37, 38. Bible Resurrections: Widow's son—agent Elijah. Shunammite's son—agent Elisha. Dead man—agent Elisha's bones. Jairus' daughter—agent Our Lord. Widow of Nain's son—agent Our Lord. Lazarus—agent Our Lord. Dorcas—agent St. Peter. Eutychus—agent St. Paul.

*Various Renderings of vers. 9, 10.*—Revised Version. Ver. 10. "For the death that He died, He died unto sin once; but the life that He liveth, He liveth unto God. For "once," read "once for all."

*Exegetical Notes.*—Ver. 9. This, and the following, verse explain what sort of a life with Christ is meant, by what we know of the resurrection life of Christ Himself. Death had dominion by Christ's own temporary submission to its power. Trans. thus—"For the death which He died, unto sin He died." De Wette points out that "by sin" must be left indefinite. If we attempt to make it more definite, "for sin," or "to that state in which He suffered the punishment of sin," we shall lose the point of comparison which lies in "to sin," "to God." The expression "to God" is indefinite again. If filled up, it means, as being glorified by and with the Father; as entirely rid of conflict with sin and death, and having only God's work (properly so-called) to do—as waiting till, in the purposes of the Father, all things are put under Him. And *to* (for) God, as being the manifestation and brightness of the Father's glory.

*Prof. John H. Godwin.*—The *life* that is incompatible with sin is the eternal life given through Jesus Christ. The death which Christ shared with sinners, which is the consequence of sin; and which came to Christ because

of His opposition to sin, and by the hands of sinners. In this loss of life there was the temporary dominion of death. The life of Christ is thus described—"unto God"—in opposition to His death. It was an effect of Divine power, a manifestation of the life of God (2 Cor. xiii. 4).

(*Note.*—This explanation is not altogether satisfactory. It scarcely apprehends the relativity, yet distinction, of the two lives, physical and spiritual.)

*C. Neil.*—Ver. 5, "likeness of His resurrection." No doubt it is true that we partake of the resurrection-life itself, but it is also true that we partake of the likeness of the resurrection in our moral and spiritual transformation and renewal. Ver. 9, "*Dieth no more.*" As the believer's life depends upon the life of the Saviour, it is most necessary to be assured that the Saviour liveth without interruption and eternally, for without this, we cannot believe that we shall live with Him.

*Prof. Agar Beet.*—Trans. ver. 9 thus, "Knowing that Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more; of Him, death is no longer Lord." In chap. vi. we have the new life in its relation to sin and to God. Note that Paul thinks of himself as already living the resurrection life (Gal. ii. 20). In ver. 5, Paul begins his proof that God designs us to share Christ's resurrection life, a life altogether new to us, by saying that our union in growth with Christ could not end with union in His death, that since with Christ death was followed by resurrection into a life altogether different from His life on earth, so it must be with us. To be dead to sin is to be free from the rule of death. The words "He lives for God" describe, not a life entered by Christ at death, but His own unchanging life. It completes the picture of the moral nature of Christ. When we see Him escaping, through death, from all contact with sin, and living a life

of which God is the only aim ; and when we remember that He died that we may share His separation from sin, we cannot doubt that He died that we may also share His life of devotion to God. God designs us to be, by union with Christ, sharers of the moral nature, and of the life of Christ, a life devoted to God. This doctrine is equally prominent in the writings of St. John (I John ii. 6, 24, 28 ; iii. 6, 24 ; iv. 17).

*H. C. G. Moule, M.A.*—Throughout this whole context the parallel of Adam and Christ needs to be borne in mind. The Second Adam submitted to the dominion or mastery of death as the appointed penalty of sin. But by that very act He exhausted death's claim on Himself and His brethren, He cancelled death.

*Crit. Com.*—As the death of Christ is not only the expiation of guilt, but the death of sin itself in all who are vitally united to Him ; so the resurrection of Christ is the resurrection of believers, not only to acceptance with God, but to newness of life.

*Dr. Sanday.*—The Christian's union with the crucified Christ binds him also to crucify and mortify (ascetically) the sinful desires of his body. Thus he is released from the "dominion" of those desires. But this is not all. Just as Christ passed from the cross to the resurrection, and overcame death once for all, exchanging for it a life wholly dependent upon God ; so, too, His followers must consider themselves cut off irrevocably—as if by death itself—from sin, and living with a new life dedicated and devoted to God, through their participation in the death and life of Jesus Christ their Lord. He who is ethically dead, is no longer the slave of sin. The eternal subsistence of the life of Christ is a guarantee for the permanence and reality of our own life, so far as it is dependent on His. If it were possible that the life of Christ should

fail, the whole fabric that the believer's faith builds upon it, would fall to the ground. But it is not possible that the life of Christ should fail. Death has lost all its power over Him. The death which He died, He died to sin. It was the last sacrifice which He made to sin, and one that freed Him from its dominion for ever. He died to it once for all, and His death did not need to be, and could not be repeated. On the other hand, His life is assured, because it is wholly dependent upon God. This is applied to St. Paul's readers. They are to regard themselves as dead—*i.e.*, insensible and inaccessible to sin, but living in close allegiance to God through union with Christ.

*Illustrations.—Newness of life.*—The believer is not merely like a tree which has new vigour and vitality through transplantation into a better soil and situation, or through digging and dunging about its roots, but rather like a tree which has been grafted, and consequently its sap is possessed of new properties and powers, its flowers improved in beauty and fragrance, and its fruit different in quality and flavour.

*Sermons in Library.*—Bossuet, Sermons, Vol. viii. pp. 1, 156; C. Simeon, Works, Vol. xv. p. 146; R. Warren, D.D., Discourses, Vol. ii. p. 142; J. C. M. Bellew, "Head and Heart," Sermons, p. 1; F. Oakeley, Sermons (1839), p. 290.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—It is a mistake to labour at proving that our Lord's resurrection was a mere resumption of His bodily life and relations. For this it certainly was not. The *differences* between His earthly life and His resurrection life are far more marked than the resemblances. They are thrust much more prominently on our attention, as if in them we were to find the deeper truth which the resurrection was to reveal. Christ was restored to direct, personal, active relations with His disciples. For awhile they were



helped by apprehending those spiritual relations through old bodily forms. But the help was only given, that soon they might not need the help, but be able fully to enter into the reality of an abiding spiritual presence. Apprehension of this is difficult, because all our life long we have been pestered with so-called "proofs" of a literal bodily resurrection. It is worth while to make earnest effort to reach the spiritual mystery.

Take, then, all the Scriptural cases of resurrection. And observe that there are no cases of restoration from death save those recorded in Scripture. And that they belong to only two periods of human history, the age of Elijah, and the age of the Lord Jesus. What is peculiar in every case is this—there was a resumption of life, but the renewed life was purely physical and was still exposed to death. Every risen person died twice. Consequently all resurrections were but illustrations of the real resurrection. Resurrection to earthly life is but the symbol of the true resurrection from the earthly life to the spiritual life. But precisely *that* we have in the resurrection of Christ. Death ended the physical life. Out of death He rose in the spiritual life, and sphere.

What sort of life must that be, which does not end in death? Clearly the element of the physical is eliminated from it. Death only concerns the physical. If a man is only a material being, he is a mortal being. But is he only that? Is he not a spiritual being? Or may he not become a spiritual being. If man is a spiritual being, set within the limitations of a material body, then death does but set the spiritual free from the material. The man rises from the grave, where he leaves his body, to move freely in the spiritual world to which he is really kin.

The man in Christ is then, like Christ, while in earthly scenes, a man with two lives—the death-imperilled physical life; and the deathless spiritual life. He cannot escape the death. He can rise out of it, free from its incubus for ever. In that sphere into which he rises, he will have a spiritual body as the agency adapted to his environment. And of that spiritual body, our Lord's resurrection body was the suggestion and symbol.

But what needs to be brought into view is the fact that, quickened in Christ, the man rises into his spiritual life *now*. And his fellowship is with the risen and spiritual Christ rather than with the earth encumbered, death-imperilled Christ.

## XVI.

### RIGHT KNOWLEDGE IS LIFE.

“And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.”—JOHN xvii. 3.

*Germ Thoughts.*—It is clear that our apprehension of this passage must depend on the meanings we connect with the terms “life eternal.” and “know.” It is to degrade the term “life eternal,” to make it synonymous with “life continuous.” It means “life spiritual,” or “the life of God in the soul of man.” With this meaning we can understand how it may come in the line of “knowledge.” Only we must recognise that the Bible uses the word “know” in a much deeper sense than usually attaches to it. With us it means, “intellectually apprehend.” The figure in the Bible word suggests “apprehend by the closest personal contact.” It suggests “intimacy, personal dealing,” “insight.” A man may know a thing because he *feels* it, quite as truly as because he *sees* it. A man, as a spiritual being, can know God, as a spiritual being, through coming into personal relations with Him; and that at once proves the existence of eternal life—spiritual life—and guarantees the nourishment and culture of it. This is old truth. The new form of it is that the personal dealing with God is now realised in personal dealing with Jesus Christ. The God apprehended in Jesus the *Son* is

God the *Father*. In one point of view, eternal life is the life of sons with the Eternal Father. And this is the life of Jesus. And this is life indeed.

*Scripture References.*—Isa. liii. 11 ; Jer. ix. 24 ; illus. Bible use of the term “know,” 1 Cor. viii. 4 ; 1 Thess. i. 9, one true God.

*Revised Version.*—“And this is life eternal, that they should know Thee, the only true God, and Him whom Thou didst send, even Jesus Christ.” (Evidently the words “Jesus Christ,” are an explanatory addition of some copyist. Our Lord would not tell His name in prayer.)

*Expository Notes.*—God, speculatively regarded as an absolute or abstract Being, is no more than intellectually interesting. God in revelation ; God in the limitations of revelation precisely adapted to our environments as limited human beings, is intensely interesting to us all. That revelation, in order to be adapted to us, must be given in stages. The fullest and highest—the one that unveils the very heart of God—is the revelation in a *sonship* which glorifies Fatherhood. Eternal life is sonship with God realised, fulfilled, and enjoyed. With sonship we are alive as Christ was alive—with the eternal life.

*Dr. Plummer.*—The Son was sent to give to men eternal life, which consists in the knowledge of God. This work the Son has completed to the glory of the Father, and He therefore prays to be glorified by the Father. *Might know*, lit., “In order that they may recognise” (Comp. chap. vi. 29 ; xv. 12 ; 1 John iii. 11, 23 ; v. 3 ; 2 John, ver. 6). The eternal life is spoken of as already present. Moreover, it is the *appropriation* of the knowledge that is specially emphasised.

Probably in this verse we have the *substance*, and not

the exact words of Christ's utterance. 'That He should use the name "Jesus" here is perhaps improbable; that He should anticipate the use of "Jesus Christ," as a proper name, is very improbable; and the expression, "the true God," is not used elsewhere by Christ, but it is used by St. John (1 John v. 20).

*H. W. Watkins, M.A.*—The Messianic work of Christ is to give eternal life to those whom God has given Him. He has accomplished that work. The accomplishment consists in revealing to men the only true God, through Jesus Christ. Eternal life consists in the knowledge of the Father as the only Being answering to the ideal thought of God; and in this knowledge, as manifested in Him whom God anointed and sent into the world to declare His attributes and character. Only in the Word made flesh can we hear the voice of mercy, forgiveness, love, fatherhood, which comes to men as the breath of life, so that they become living souls.

*Webster and Wilkinson.*—The term "only true God," expresses the God of the Old Testament. God revealed in Christ is the distinctive truth of the New Testament. In the first case the true God, in distinction from the many gods of heathendom. In the second, the special manifestation of God as a Saviour, in the person of His Son.

*Critical Commentary.*—This life-eternal, then, is not mere conscious and unending existence, but a life of acquaintance with God in Christ. "The only true God," the sole personal living God, in glorious contrast equally with heathen polytheism, philosophic naturalism, and mystic pantheism.

*Edersheim.* — And what constitutes "the eternal life"? Not what we so often think, who confound

with the thing its effects, or else its results. It refers not to the future, but to the present. It is the realisation of what Christ had told them in these words, "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me." It is the pure sunlight on the soul, resulting in, or reflecting, the knowledge of Jehovah, the Personal, Living, True God, and of Him whom He did send, Jesus Christ. These two branches of knowledge must not so much be considered as co-ordinate, but rather as inseparable.

*Sermons in Library.*—Charnock's Works, Vol. iv. p. 3; R. Baxter on "The Knowledge of God," Works, Vol. xiii. 1; John Warren, D.D., Sermons, Vol. ii. 91; G. Burder's "Village Sermons," p. 6.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—Introduce by showing that the dependence of man upon God is far more than that involved in the relation of creature and Creator. There is a mystery in man. He is what he is by a Divine inbreathing. That implies possibilities which no other merely fashioned creature can attain, and relations with God which no other creature can enjoy. 1. The idea formed concerning deity is the basis of all religious systems. Show the place which God must necessarily take in all religious systems. The central presence of God makes it religion, as distinct from either philosophy or ethics. It will be easy to illustrate how the idea entertained of God has given tone and character to each system. All reformations of religions have been recoveries of better and worthier ideas of God. This is effectively illustrated in the reform of Zoroaster. But it is the thing of permanent value in the reformation of Luther. He proclaimed worthier views of God than prevailed in the religious world of his time. It seems strange that the true know-



ledge of God should have been hidden so long from humanity. For this reasons may be found. The knowledge was given as soon as man was ready and able to receive it. All revelation must be adaptive to receptive capacity. You cannot explain the telephone to a child of three. And man had to find out that he could not apprehend God worthily by his own endeavour. The true knowledge of God can come only by revelation. It must be that which He tells concerning Himself. And though God has given man the opportunity, and the power of finding out much concerning Him, man has self-willedly incapacitated himself for the search by his sin.

2. The true view of God is the great means of awakening sinners to a sense of their condition. By looking either at one's own sins, or on the sins of the world, no man ever yet gained a worthy view of sin. It is the apprehension of God—of God in Christ—that alone proves efficiently self-revealing. This was true when God was *at* Sinai. How much more true it is now that God is *in* Christ.

3. Enlarging views of deity are directly associated with growing conditions of spiritual life. Our first views of God must be greatly distorted by human fears and joys. Show what our first ideas of God are likely to be. See the main features of the early religions. Show how the man gradually gains fuller and worthier views. But in the process there is no resting. The true God is ever above and beyond us. We can always know Him better than we do. This is even true of the knowledge of God in Christ; for Christ is an unlimited quantity. If it were possible fully to know him historically, it would be hopelessly impossible for us to know Him perfectly, as an *ideal*. And every advance in the knowing of Christ is knowing God better.

## XVII.

### GLORIFYING OUR FATHER.

“Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit ; so shall ye be My disciples.”—JOHN xv. 8.

*Germ Thoughts.*—Glorifying the Father was our Lord’s supreme idea for His own life, and the one purpose in life which he tried to put on the hearts of His disciples. Glorifying *God* is not precisely the same thing as glorifying the *Father*. Christ was not just *man*, He was *Son*. As man, it was His duty to glorify God ; as Son it was his joy to glorify His Father. We know how a son can honour a father. It is by the much fruitage of a loving obedience. Thus Christ glorified His Father. “I do always the things that please Him.” As each tree has its characteristic fruit, so each relation that a man sustains has its appropriate expression. If a man is a son, with Christ the Son, then his proper fruitage is obedience, and he should honour his Father with *much* of it. Obedience may take form as doing, or as bearing, or as yielding. All these are illustrated in our Lord’s Son-like life.

*Scripture References.*—Matt. v. 16 ; Phil. i. 11 ; John viii. 31 ; xiii. 35 ; Scripture references to Vines, as illustrative of text. Canaan represented as rich in vines. Gen. xlix. 11 ; Deut. vi. 11 ; viii. 8. Note the Grapes of Eshcol brought by the spies. Israel compared

to vine—Ps. lxxx. 8 ; Isa. v. 1 ; Jer. ii. 21. Threatenings of destruction of vines—Ps. lxxviii. 75 ; Hosea ii. 12 ; Hab. iii. 17. For fruitfulness, see Num. xiii. 20.

*Various Renderings.*—Revised Version, “Herein is (marg. was) My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit” (marg. and be My disciples). Or “bear much fruit and become My disciples.”

*Exegetical Notes.*—*Barnes.*—God is glorified in much fruit, Christian fruit, because therein Christians imitate God, and the whole world sees that the tendency of the Divine administration and character is to make men holy, to produce in us that which is lovely and true and honest, and of good report.

*Dr. Plummer.*—In ver. 8, as in ver. 6, the verb is the aorist passive ; not “is being glorified,” but “is glorified”—*i.e.*, whenever the occasion arises. The aorist is used of an act regarded in itself as accomplished at any conceivable moment. Comp. chap. xvii. 26. *Herein* properly refers to “granting your prayers,” and not to “in order that ye may bear.” The sense of the verse is this : “In granting your prayers My Father is glorified, in order that ye may be fruitful and become My disciples.”

(*Note.*—If Dr. Plummer is right, the point of teaching in the verse is quite changed. God is glorified by *answering prayer*, not by the *fruit-bearing* of the disciples. And God’s answering prayer becomes the source of strength to bear fruit.)

*Watkins* supports Plummer. *Herein* refers to the words which have gone before. The thought then will be, “In this doing whatever ye ask, My Father is glorified in order that ye may bear much fruit, and that ye may become my disciples.”

(*Note.*—It does not easily appear how the Father

being glorified is effective in making us bear much fruit. God's doing what we ask may help us to bear fruit, but God's being glorified does not help us. On the whole the older association of the words is much to be preferred, even if it does involve some grammatical strain.)

*Olshausen* on vers. 1-9.—In form this is rather a similitude than a parable. The fundamental idea is this:—The intimacy of the union between Christ and His people is as great as if one life, one blood, flowed through them all, and this *very* union is the only condition under which true fruits can be borne. In the same sense St. Paul compares all believers to an organic body, in which Christ is the head, and the several believers the members. Hence the similitude is designed to recommend the preservation of that spiritual fellowship, without which the disciples could not hope to have their efforts crowned by a blessing. The fact that no fruit is borne, is always a presumption that already the internal vital union has been dissolved, though external form may be preserved. This, however, is followed by severance of external connection. In the case of that which bears fruit, the Divine activity takes a promotive form.

*Literary Note on the Vine.*—The plant was known to the Egyptians. Representations of its careful culture, of the treading out, of storing wine in jars, have been discovered on their tombs. The vine is not a native of Egypt, and probably not of Syria, but of the hilly region on the southern shores of the Caspian, and the Persian province of Ghilan. In the districts of the Caucasus, and in the elevated valley of Cashmere, vines climb to the tops of the loftiest trees, and yield abundant fruit. Note the use of the different parts of the vine. Sap, is used as medicine. Grape powder is made by drying and

powdering unripe fruit. Fruit when ripe is beautiful, either fresh or dried as raisins. Juice of ripe fruit is called *must*, and it is a pleasant beverage. Wine, Alcohol, and Vinegar are obtained by fermentation. The leaves yield tartar. The seeds yield oil. Ashes of the twigs yield a salt known as carbonate of potash.

The vine at Hampton Court covers a space of 2200 square feet. Bunches often 10 to 12 lbs. in weight. One bunch of grapes grown in our own country weighed 19 lbs., and measured 23 by 19½ inches.

*Lewis Hughes, B.A.*—Various conjectures have been offered as to the occasion of this allegory. Those who believe that Jesus left the upper room after chap. xiv., suppose that it was suggested by the vineyards on the way to Gethsemane. Those who think that he had not yet left the house, suppose that a vine might be creeping in at the window, or that He alluded to the fruit of the vine He had just consecrated for the Last Supper. If it were necessary to adopt any, the last seems the most probable.

*Sermons in Library.*—On ver. 4, Murray, "Fruits of Spirit," p. 190; ver. 5, Clarkson, vol. ii. p. 101; Sterne, Collected Works, p. 523; ver. 8, Bishop Beveridge, Works, Vol. iii. p. 189. G. Campbell, Sermons, p. 264.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—It is better to treat ver. 7 as a sort of parenthesis. It introduces quite a new topic; and in passing, shows how much—how many things—may be found to depend on the believer's abiding in Christ. What is especially in our Lord's mind is the fruit-bearing of His disciples. It is *this* that He is talking about. He deals with the conditions and the consequences, of such fruit-bearing. See vers. 2, 4, 5. Abiding in Christ is the condition. Glorifying the Father is the consequence. The Father-God is glorified when—  
1. His Fatherly will is obeyed. He is glorified in much fruitage of *obedience*. 2. His Fatherly purpose is out-

wrought by His children. He is glorified in much fruitage of *service*. These are the points to unfold, illustrate, and enforce. It may be well to show that Christ's God is always the Father, and that the fruitage He bore in His human life, was glorifying the Fatherhood, by his son-like obedience and son-like service. Then it may be shown that the work of the Divine Son was to change us unto His *Son*-image, to make us like Himself, in our sonship, and so fully link us with Him in bringing forth much fruit of son-like obedience and son-like service. Then it will come into view that this son-like obedience and service of the Father—an obedience and service inspired by a supreme love, is just the highest thing to which a man can rise. Rising into it he becomes Christ-like, and a disciple indeed. But precisely this is the supreme difficulty of life for us. It is never easily attained. We may be always growing towards it. And we know the conditions of growth—abiding in Christ, and self-watching and endeavour. As we seek to grow, we may feel to be in the high and holy inspiration of the thought that our fruitage, our *much* son-like fruitage of obedience and service, glorifies God as the *Father*; that is, it glorifies the highest and best revelation which has been made to us of God, even that revelation of Fatherhood which comes so graciously and impressively in the Son's life of the Divine Son. "I would serve, and be a son," and glorify God the Father, even as Jesus did.



## XVIII.

### THE CHARACTERISTIC "LAW OF CHRIST."

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

—GALATIANS vi. 2.

*Germ Thoughts.*—Every man who takes the position of a thought-leader must have a truth, a side of truth, a way of looking at things, a principle which is unique to him, sharply defined, and distinctly inspirational to him. It need not be absolutely original, but it must be gripped with a force which gives it all the energy of an original idea. One of the best illustrations of this may be found in Darwin, whose life and teaching were dominated by the development of evolutionary theory. His characteristic *law* was evolution. In this way inquire what was the dominant idea, or law, of Christ? What basal idea does Christianity rest upon? What differentiates Christianity from all other religions? Show that its primary idea is that no man must live unto himself. Every man must live for some other man. The man who makes another serve him is not characteristically a Christian. The man who serves another is, in genius, a Christian. The man who knows another man has a burden, which he can help to bear, and leaves the man to bear it alone, is not a Christ-man. The man who takes up and bears the other man's burden is, so far, in the mind of Christ, obeying the law of Christ. We can bear another's

burden by wisely offered help, and by kindly expressed sympathy.

*Scripture References.*—Gal. v. 13, "By love serve one another." Romans xv. 1, "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak." 1 Thess. v. 14, "Support the weak." See also John xiii. 14, 15, 34; xv. 12; James ii. 8; 1 John iv. 21, "This commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also."

*Various Renderings.*—Read "ye will fulfil" (rigorously fulfil).

*Exegetical Notes.*—*Ellicott.*—"Bear the burdens of one another." "One another" is emphatic. In opposition to the selfish feeling which would leave each one to bear his own. For the Apostle's own example, see 2 Cor. xi. 29. The meaning of "burden" must not be too circumscribed. It is chosen with an inclusive reference to all forms of weaknesses, sufferings, and perhaps most especially, sins. *Fulfil* denotes a complete filling up, and points to a *partial* rather than to an entire vacuum. The "law of Christ" means, not the law of Christ generally, but that "law of love" which was specifically characteristic of Christ. The term *nomos*, law, seems to have been chosen with some reference to the case of the Galatians, who affected an observance of the law of Moses.

*Webster and Wilkinson.*—For the example of Paul, see 1 Cor. ix. 19-23; x. 33. Ver. 5, "shall bear his own burden." This is proverbial; conveying the two-fold notion, that each will have enough to do to give an account of himself, and that each will be judged absolutely as he is in himself, and not comparatively, as regards others. It seems paradoxical with ver. 2, perhaps the sentiment is, that true sympathy is associated with a sense of individual responsibility. He who

forms a right estimate of himself will have most consideration for others.

(*Note by Ed.*).—Why not see the relation of verses 2 and 5 in this light. Every man must bear his own burden, which, according to the law of Christ, is just the bearing of the burden of some other?

The word *baros* (burden) used in ver. 2, is used in Æschyl. and Pers. for grief, misery, weight of woe. Its main idea is *heavy*. *Fortion* (burden) used in ver. 5, refers especially to the freight of ships, or lading; then it is used to denote wares, merchandise. *Baros*, in Matt. xx. 12, means the heavy labour of the day. In the text it rather covers sinful conduct, and its necessary consequences, trouble and sorrow.

*Fausset*.—If ye legalists must bear burdens, then instead of legal (Rabbinical) burdens, “bear one another’s burdens,” lit., weights, that is, such things as exceed the strength of those who have to bear them. Since ye desire “the law,” then fulfil the law of Christ, which is not made up of various minute observances, but whose sole *burden* is love. Romans xv. 3, gives Christ Himself as the example in this particular duty.

*Dr. Sanday*.—Deal considerately and kindly with the fallen, for you may fall. Bear each other’s burdens, for to claim any superiority to them is mere delusion. Take one another’s burdens upon yourselves by kindly sympathy. Our Lord was said to *bear* the physical infirmities of those whom he healed. Matt. viii. 17. By showing sympathy to others in their distress, of whatever kind that distress may be,—whether physical, mental, or moral—the Christian will best fulfil that “new commandment” bequeathed to him by his Master, the “law of love.” (See John xiii. 34; 1 John iii. 23.)

*G. G. Findlay, B.A.*.—How unseemly for *brethren* to

be *vain-glorious* towards each other, to be *provoking and envying one another*. If they are spiritual men, they should look more considerably on the faults of their neighbours, more seriously on their own responsibilities. The burden the apostle has in view here is, that of a brother's trespass. The word "trespass" (not "sin"), points not to the cause of the man's fall, but to the condition in which it has placed him, such a fall deserves commiseration. The burden of a brother's trespass is the most painful that can devolve upon a Christian man. But this is not the only burden we bring upon each other. There are burdens of anxiety and sorrow, of personal infirmity, of family difficulty, of business embarrassment, infinite varieties and complications of trial in which the resources of brotherly sympathy are taxed. The injunction of the Apostle has an unlimited range. That which burdens my friend and brother cannot be otherwise than a solicitude to me. Whatever it be that cripples him and hinders his running the race set before him, I am bound, according to the best of my judgment and ability, to assist him to overcome it. If I leave him to stagger on alone, to sink under his load, when my shoulders might have eased it for him, the reproach will be mine. This is no work of supererogation, no matter of mere liking or choice. I am not at liberty to *refuse* to share the burden of the brotherhood, because I am under the "law of Christ." This law the Apostle has already cited and enforced against the contentions and jealousies rife in Galatia (chap. v. 14, 15). But it has a further application. This law makes of the Church one body, with a solidarity of interests and obligations. There is no limit to the service which the redeemed brotherhood of Christ may expect from its members.

*Sermon Notes.*—*Samuel Cox, D.D., on ver. 5.*—"Our burden our blessing. Vol. ii. p. 177. We usually take it as a doom that we have to "bear our own burden." We shall never know the true peace, never gain an unfailing consolation and support, till we can see that our burden is itself a blessing, till we are quite as sure that it is as good of God to impose it upon us as it is good of Him to relieve us of it. It is as we conquer difficulties; as we rise by manifold effort of brain and heart and hand, though the whole world conspire to keep us down, that we acquire character, force, largeness and elevation of spirit. In fine, burdens are blessings in disguise. For want of a burden the over-prosperous man is only too likely to leave the straight path. With nothing to bear, nothing to conquer and not much to do, he grows indolent, self-indulgent, fastidious, perhaps hypochondriacal; and because he has no other burden, becomes a burden to himself. Put a heavy burden on a man's back, and at once he begins to feel his feet, to consider the road he has to tread. God, with wise and loving hand, imposes heavy burdens on us, and hard to be borne, that we may feel our feet, and keep our path, and grow in strength, take his help, and go the shortest way home. As to inward and spiritual burdens, take—1. The burden of mystery which lies on the sacred page. 2. That profound compunction for sin which at times rends and breaks our hearts. 3. The burden of unsatisfied aspirations and desires. Our whole life is a bearing of burdens, but the burdens we have to bear are, or may be, our help and our honour. Bless God for your burdens, and bear them with a patient and a cheerful heart.

*Sermons in Library.*—F. W. Robertson, Vol. ii. p. 123.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—As the text is part of a *letter*, it is well to notice to whom it was sent, and what anxiety concerning the persons addressed was in the mind of the writer. The hard legal-minded men (and such the Galatians were) are always in grave danger of being unsympathetic. Attention to formal

and minute regulations of law or ritual begets a kind of conscious superiority, which leads a man to hold aloof from, and look down upon his weaker brethren, and more especially on those who may have slipped and fallen. This aloofness from brethren through assumed superiority Paul regarded as fatal to Christian life. It was wholly opposed to the characteristic law of Christ. So he reminds of that law, and indicates what would be the fitting obedience of it, even a sympathetic and helpful bearing of one another's burdens.

I. The characteristic Christian law. Morality never gets beyond this, doing to others as you would have others do to you. The great human law-givers base their laws on individual rights, and on the common rights of the community. Our Lord took entirely new ground, and gave a wholly new commandment. It was not merely that we should "love one another," it was this, you must love another better than yourself; and that other must love you better than he loves himself. The world would be absolutely and entirely regenerated, if that law could gain universal sway. It is precisely that law which Christ obeyed and illustrated. "He pleased not self." He lived, He spent, for others. And we are His, if we please not self, but take upon our hearts *His* burdens. We may test Christians by this inquiry,—Which is first with them? Self or Christ, and then others for Christ's sake. Wherein is Christ model man? Precisely in this. He was a man who lived for somebody, not for Himself. He went through life, carrying somebody's burden. And the supreme dignity and charm of our Lord's human life is seen in this—He was a man going to and fro, day by day, with somebody's burden on his shoulder. And it is "enough for the servant that he be as his Master."



2. The ways in which this characteristic law works out, when it is made to rule the life. This scarcely needs hints. It makes a life noble in the tenderness of its *sympathy*, and in the consecrated, and watchful spirit of *service*. We are quick to *see* burdens ; we are prompt to take them, or to share them.

## XIX.

### CARE FOR OUR KINDRED.

“For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? Or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?”—  
ESTHER viii. 6.

*Germ Thoughts.*—The spirit of patriotism is but an enlargement of the spirit of family. Good and bad attach to it because it is an enlargement in adaptation to society-conditions which man's self-will has created. Nations are not original Divine institutions. God made families, and the natural organisation was, sets of families. Outside the Adamic covenant and revelation nations were formed. They were part of the scheme of humanity for its mutual protection from its worst self. And *patriotism* is the *esprit* which necessarily grows up out of this effort at mutual protection. This patriotism has been one of the most potent forces in securing the safety and development of sections of humanity. But it is also true, that it is in grave danger of being exaggerated and misdirected; and then it has become, and still may become, one of the most potent forces of mischief for humanity. It is always at best a selfish spirit; it may inspire inconsiderate treatment of others. National self-centredness is only more morally mischievous than individual self-centredness. What is so greatly needed in the Christian Church is something answering

to national patriotism. The division of the Church into sections makes large patriotic feeling almost impossible.

*Scripture References.*—Esther vii. 4 ; Neh. ii. 3.

*Various Renderings.*—For “endure” margin has “be able that I may see.”

*Notes on the History of the time, and on the Book of Esther.*—*Dr. Angus.*—Few comparatively of the Jews availed themselves of the opportunity to return from Babylon to Palestine. Most of the existing race had been born in Babylonia. Not more than 50,000 persons went up with Zerubbabel ; and the second band, under Ezra, more than seventy years later, probably numbered in all 6000 persons. Later on other bands sought the city and temple of God, but probably the great bulk of the people remained permanently behind.

Some suppose that the Book of Esther was written by Mordecai ; others (and this is a supposition that may account for the omission of the name of God), that it is an extract from the records of Persia (chap. x. 2). This supposition accounts for the retention of the word *purim* (chap. ix. 24, 32), for the details given concerning the kingdom of Ahasuerus, and for the exactness with which the names of his ministers, and of Haman’s sons are recorded, also for the Jews being mentioned only in the third person, and for Esther being frequently designated, the Queen, and Mordecai, by epithet, the Jew. It would also account for those parentheses which occur in the course of the narrative (the object of which is to give explanation to a Jewish reader) ; and for the abrupt termination to the narrative.

The facts here narrated come in between the sixth and seventh chapters of the Book of Ezra. The institution of the festival of *purim* is the evidence of the truth of the Book of Esther.

*Kitto.*—The Jewish origin of Esther was probably not known to the king when she was taken to the harem, so that, when she divulged it to the king, she seemed included in the doom of extermination pronounced against the Jews. This appeal to the king's passions enabled her to turn the royal indignation against Haman. The laws would not allow the king to alter a decree once made, and therefore the Jews were authorised to stand on their defence. This, with the known alteration of the views at court, was the means of preserving them. The narrative is especially illustrative of the providence of God, using the very wickedness of men to effect His purposes concerning the people.

*Matthew Henry.* — We cannot now expect such miracles to be wrought for us as were wrought for Israel when they were brought out of the land of Egypt; but we may expect that in such ways as God took to defeat Haman's plot, he will still protect His people. The book may be taken to illustrate Psalm xxxvii. 12, 13.

The queen, in the connection of the text, comes a second time unbidden to Ahasuerus. She presents her prayer with much affection. "She fell down at the king's feet, and besought him with tears." She expresses it with submission and profound deference to the king, and his wisdom and will. "If it please the king and I have found favour in thy sight." She enforces her prayer with a pathetic plea, "for how can I endure to see the evil that shall come upon my people."

*Dr. Cunningham Geikie.*—In the reign of Ahasuerus (Greek Xerxes, successor to Darius) the incidents associated with Esther are located. The great king was idling his life away, in the fortress palace of Shushan, among the cool mountain breezes of his metropolitan province, while his generals and soldiers were fighting

and dying for him in the east and west. Fifty-two years had passed since the return, when Xerxes ordered a series of feasts to be given, on a scale of surpassing magnificence, in his grounds and halls. The Persian kings had always several wives of various grades. At this time Vashti reigned supreme as the royal favourite. Hadassah, or Esther, was probably very young. She was an orphan, and her cousin, Mordecai, treated her as his own child. Haman, the enemy of the Jews, was an Agagite—that is, of the royal race of the Amalekites. There was feud between him and Mordecai; and Haman schemed revenge on the Jewish race mainly to effect his revenge on Mordecai. A decree was drawn up by Haman and circulated, according to which all Jews throughout the empire were to be killed on a day named, and their property seized for the king. This was the peril of Esther's kindred, from which she and Mordecai succeeded in delivering them.

*Suggestion for Working out Sermon.*—As introduction, sketch the circumstances of the case, and give some estimate of the characters of the different persons introduced in the story. Ahasuerus, Vashti, Esther, Haman, and Mordecai. Indicate the kind of sufferance in which the Jewish people lived in the Babylonian provinces. I. *Kindred*.—Point out the purpose of God in uniting families and kindreds. Show the amount of interest we feel in “kindred,” in mental, social, political and national relations. Such interest should be peculiarly strong under Christian relations. (For this head see *Germ Thoughts*.) II. *Kindred's Danger*.—Explain the race hatred, and the plotting of Haman. Make the dangers of the Jews illustrate the moral danger of humanity by reason of the schemes of the arch-enemy of souls. III. *Sorrow for the imperilled*.—Point out

that we are often able to estimate the danger of others, when we are quite blind to our own danger. Yet our sorrow often stops at sorrow, and does not pass, as it should, into resolute and self-sacrificing endeavours to secure their deliverance and safety. In how full a sense this applies to our distress concerning, but neglect of efforts for, the morally imperilled. IV. *Efforts to save our kindred.*—Esther presents the example of taking the case of our kindred to God, in prayer, and then doing all on their behalf that lies in our power, and is within the limitations of possible self-sacrifice. Close persuasively with our Lord's intense interest in His kindred, whose dangerous moral condition He estimated so perfectly. He grieved over them as "sheep having no shepherd." He wept over them because they would not respond to the efforts He made in their behalf.



## XX.

### PLEASING GOD WITH OUR FAITH.

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him.”—HEB. xi. 6.

*Germ Thoughts.*—The difficulties which we find connected with faith are associated with a man-made *doctrine* of faith; and not with faith as an original, natural, and necessary capacity of every dependent creature. Precisely the sin of man is that he does not trust in God as he should, and as he would if he were still the simple, unbiassed, dependent creature which God made, and so made that it should be perfectly natural for him to lean upon Himself. It is impossible for man to please God without trusting Him, just as it is impossible for a wife to please her husband without trusting him, or for a son to please his father without trusting him. A dogmatic faith, or faith in some dogma about God, makes confusion of the Scriptures, and keeps men from right relations with God, by requiring what, to many minds, are intellectually impossible conditions. The faith which pleases God is faith in *Him*, trust in His living love and lead. Belief in something somebody says about Him, may help trust in Him, but it is not essential. I believe in *God*—in *God Himself*—to whom my soul, my very being, makes witness. I put God into the very closest relations to my whole

life, to everything in my life. And *that* pleases Him. That way we can all please Him.

*Scripture References.*—Gen. v. 23, 24; Comp. Rom. viii. 24, 25; 2 Cor. iv. 18; v. 7.

*Various Renderings.*—Definition of “faith” in verse 1. “Faith is the giving substance to things hoped for.” Equivalents for “substance” are “ground,” “confidence,” “assurance.” For “evidence” may be read “proving.” (With “faith,” a thing merely “hoped for” becomes a thing “worked for.” It ceases to be a dream, it becomes an active reality.)

*Exegetical Notes.*—This chapter contains illustrations of faith, as a practical power in life. The writer desires to show that faith makes a motive and inspiration for daily life and conduct, as sufficient and as satisfactory as distinct announcements and demonstrative proofs.

Ver. 1. *Faith is the substance of things hoped for.*—The confident expectation becomes so real, that the man of faith acts as if he already had what he hoped for. Things only “hoped for” have no actually present reality to us. They are “castles in the air.” They gain practical reality, and are inspirational to conduct, when faith grasps them. Faith gives a present enjoyment of what had been only a dream. *Moses Stuart* points out that faith here is not specifically “saving faith,” but rather faith as a practical principle and power, influencing all life and conduct. “The true and essential nature of faith is confidence in God, belief in His declarations.” (It would be better to say, belief in Him, or trust in Him.) Faith here is the principle of pious and virtuous belief and action.

Ver. 6. The two absolutely fundamental truths of universal religion are—1. God exists. 2. God is moral Governor of the universe, and as such rewards the pious, and punishes the ungodly. The very statement that

Enoch pleased God is an assertion that in Him faith was found. No one can be the habitual worshipper of God, if his faith does not grasp these two truths.

*Hare.*—"Victory of Faith."—Every genuine act of faith is the act of the whole man, not of his understanding alone, not of his affections alone, not of his will alone, but of all these in their central, aboriginal unity. Faith becomes the faculty in man through which the spiritual world exercises its sway over him.

*Dr. Vaughan.*—Faith is that principle, that exercise of mind and soul, which has for its object things not seen, but hoped for, and which, instead of sinking under them as too ponderous, whether from their difficulty, or their uncertainty, stands firm under them—supports and sustains their pressure—in other words, is assured of, confides in, and relies on them.

*Dr. Walsham How.*—Faith is more than belief. Faith is that power within us which makes the things of another world seem as real to us as the things of this world—which brings home to us the things not seen, and makes them as clear and sure to us as if we could see them with our very eyes. The great work of faith is to *realise*—make *real* to us—the things of the world unseen. And so faith is sometimes called *the eye of the soul*, because it looks upon the great truths of religion, and sees them as clearly, certainly, and constantly as the bodily eye looks upon and sees all outward things around us. Faith, the eye of the soul, has no doubt about the things it looks upon. It is quite sure that there is a God. Faith means a great deal more than mere *belief*. It means making a thing *real* to our souls, having it ever present to our minds, keeping it so clearly before us that we cannot help *acting* upon it. We cannot help, when the unseen world seems so real and present to us—we

cannot help living for that unseen world, instead of for the world we see ("Plain Words," p. 101).

*Hawthorn Homilies.*—Men are better or worse according to the measure of their faith; that is, of their power to realise the evidences of things not seen. Columbus said, "When I passed across the sea to find a land that men thought dwelt only in my fancy, they scorned me for my toil, yet had I faith in God, that He would prosper and direct my purpose" (p. 123).

*Illustration of Faith as Inspiring Action.*—Some years ago I was visiting at a Silk Throwster's, whose water-mill was situated in a lonely part of the country. One morning a letter brought him the news that an unexpected late frost had stricken the belt of country in Europe, where the mulberry tree flourished, and the silk worms were cultivated. He had faith in the report, and the faith inspired actions. Orders were at once given to have the gig ready, and as soon as breakfast and prayers were over, I was sent seven miles to the nearest railway station with a telegram to his agent, ordering him to buy up all the raw silk in the market. His faith in the report led him to anticipate a failure of the year's mulberry crop, and consequent an increase in the price of raw silk.

*Sermons in Library.*—Robert Barclay, Sermons, p. 339; John Wesley, "Faith" Works, Vol. vii. p. 231, 326; C. Simeon, "The Nature of Faith," Works, Vol. xix. p. 366; J. H. Newman, "University Sermons," p. 167.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—On the lines of the Germ Thoughts. Show that the strain of the "spiritual"—the spiritual dispensation into which they had passed—was proving an over-strain to the Jewish Christians for whose sake this epistle was written. It may be with some fairness said, that the Jewish system cultivated *sight*, and the Christian system cultivated *faith*. A religion of ritual ought not to, but it does, tend to keep

men's minds and hearts in the material sphere. Christ brings the revelation of the spiritual sphere, and lifts us up into it. In it other faculties than sight—supremely the faculty of *faith*—find exercise. Man is really a being of two worlds. Not as so commonly asserted, of this world, and the world to *come* ; for with God a man's life is an eternal *now*. His two worlds are, the seen and the unseen ; the material and the spiritual. He has the appropriate faculties for relation to both. He is not a man, as man should be, while he belongs only to one world, and puts in exercise only the faculties belonging to *that* world. And thus comes into view the difference that distinguishes men. Some move in only one world, some move in two. For some sight, sense is all. In some the faith faculty is quickened, and it is as with Elisha's servant, round and overhallowing the material world is the spiritual world. And he only can really live aright in the material world, whose life is lived in the spiritual world—whose "life is hid with Christ in God." He lives on "faith." To him the unseen is the only real.

## XXI.

### THE SONG OF THE FULLY REDEEMED.

“And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.”—REVELATION xv. 3.

*Germ Thoughts.*—Regard the book of Revelation as poetically presenting the various circumstances of trial, strain, and difficulty, in the midst of which, and by means of which, the Living Christ is perfecting His Church. For the cheer of those who are still in the midst of the conflict, occasional visions are given of the joy and glory of those in whom the work of Divine grace is *completed*, who have won their victory. The text is one of these visions, and it shows us *what* the victors remember; and *whom* they praise. The “strain and stress” of life are glorified, when we can see the sublime issues which the presiding, living, sanctifying Lord Jesus, has brought out of them. The refiner’s stern firework is all explained when we see the pure gold that follows His refining. Those cleansed wholly may wear white robes, and sing.

*Scripture References.*—For “sea of glass,” ver. 2, compare Rev. iv. 6; xxi. 18; for the fire symbol, see Matt. iii. 11; ver. 3, for song of Moses, see Exod. xv. 1; Rev. xiv. 3; instances of special songs: At creation of world, Job xxxviii. 5-7; Deborah, Judges v. 1-3; David, 2 Sam. 1-18, 19; iii. 33; bringing back the Ark,



Ps. lxxviii. 25; birth of Christ, Luke ii. 13, 14; instances of singing as a natural expression of spiritual life (every holy man is fond of psalms and hymns). The Psalms, Isaiah's visions of latter-day glory, Isa. xxxv. 6; li. 11. &c. Elisha's calling for a minstrel. Saul had the spirit of prophecy come to him on meeting music. See James v. 13.

*Various Renderings.*—In ver. 2, good MSS., omit the words, "and over his mark." For "the harps," read "harps." In ver. 3, may be read, instead of "King of Saints," "King of the nations." or "King of the ages." This last is probably the best, as what is in thought is, the presidency of the Living Christ over the "age" or "dispensation."

*Exegetical Notes* on vers. 2, 3.—*Webster and Wilkinson.*—As in chap. vii.; xi. 16–18; xiv. 1–5, a vision of the blessedness and glory of the fully saved is interposed in the represented group of events. It forms a pause which may be compared with the choral ode in the Greek drama. After the vision, in each case, the prophetic action is resumed. *Sea of glass*; the glassy surface probably symbolises the calm, peaceful state of heavenly bliss. The fire may intimate the fiery trials through which the noble army of martyrs had passed. *Victory over the beast*; either victorious in escaping the power of the beast, or who had carried off victory from the beast. *Stand on the sea*; that is, on the shore of the sea. The imagery is taken from the Israelites, looking upon the sea, which waved over their foes, the Egyptians. Moses, the *servant* of God, the Lamb the *Son* of God. See the teaching on this distinction in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

*Matthew Henry* on Rev. xv. 2, 3.—They stood on a sea of glass. Some think, representing this world, a brittle thing, that shall be broken in pieces. Others think,

the Gospel covenant is meant, and allusion is to the brazen sea in the Temple, used by the priests for washing. Others again think it refers to the Red Sea, that stood as it were congealed while Israel went through. The pillar of fire reflecting light upon the waters, would seem to mingle fire with them.

*Homiletic Commentary.*—Moses . . . Lamb, are the types of our two-fold redemption, material redemption from circumstances, and spiritual redemption from evil. Moses represents God's triumph over evil in its *outward* manifestations, the Lamb represents God's triumph over evil in its *inward* manifestations.

*Moses Stuart.*—"A sea of glass"—*i.e.*, a sea that was clear, pellucid, splendid. In chap. iv. 6, this sea is said to be like crystal. That which is here called *sea* is the pavement of the court above, in the midst of which the throne of God stands. "Mingled with fire"—*i.e.*, the tessellated pavement was composed in part of stones having a red or fiery colour, as well as with those which were pellucid. Fire is spoken of as intermingled on the present occasion, because in this way it presents a symbol that Heaven is angry—*i.e.*, is about to punish. (*Note.*—The student will observe that Stuart here brings in quite an alien idea. What is dealt with, is the experience of the redeemed. God's dealings with *them* are symbolled by glass mingled with fire.) "Standing on the sea of glass"—*i.e.*, stationed round the throne of glory which stood in the midst of that sea, or smooth and level pavement. The martyrs in heaven sung a song of anticipative triumph, holding it for certain that all which had been signified by symbols would be carried into execution.

*Bishop Boyd Carpenter.*—Near the throne of God is the calm and translucent sea of God's counsels of righteousness and love—now clear as crystal, now ruddy

with the fire of righteous indignation, the expression of His eternal will against sin. The seer describes the victors as "those who conquer out of the wild beast." They come off conquerors out of the struggle, and they escape from the temptation to worship His image, and wear the badge of His service.

*Sermon Notes.*—*E. L. Hull.*—Two ways of interpreting the Book of Revelation. 1. We may regard it simply as a book of partially unfulfilled prophecy. This opens a wide field of profitless discussion. (Hull has a thought which is striking and suggestive, though open to criticism: "If the Bible is a book for *all the ages*, there must be some part of it which lies, as yet, in shadow, and will be comprehended only by the men of the future.") 2. We may regard the Book of Revelation as a representation of that conflict which makes all history—the conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of evil. Then the book becomes a grand picture of the final triumph of spiritual principles. The truths taught here are these:—1. The service of song is the highest employment of the redeemed. 2. That song unites the spiritual heroes of all the ages. One conflict—one faith. 3. Its theme is God's connected dispensations. On earth we praise God for Redemption; in heaven, they praise God for the whole economy of Revelation. Christ fulfilled the work of Moses.

*Sermons in Library.*—*Phillips Brooks'* "Twenty Sermons," p. 110: "The sea of glass mingled with fire, is repose mingled with struggle. It is peace, and rest, and achievement, with the power of trial and suffering yet alive and working within it. It is calmness still pervaded by the discipline through which it has been reached." C. Simeon, Works, Vol. xxi. p. 203. Henry Melvill, Lectures, p. 254.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—The memory of what our full redemption has cost will keep with us when our full redemption is reached; but it will be turned

into song. 1. The song of Moses was a song of conquest—over evil in its outward physical manifestations. That by the special intervention and help of God. 2. The song of the Lamb is a song of conquest—over evil in its inward spiritual manifestations. This, also, by the special intervention and help of God. Akin to St. Paul's injunction, in Colossians, chap. iii.—put off outward evil; cleanse out inward evil. Akin also to the present life and experience of believers, as they are *being* redeemed. The Christian must now know *song in struggle*, or he may find himself out of harmony with, and unfitted to take part in, the songs in triumph. The fully redeemed, like Israel, stand on the other side shore of the sea, over which they have crossed—the sea of earthly life. To them it seems a sea of glass now, the emblem of their rest after conflict. To them the waters seem mingled with fire, for they cherish the memory of the conflicts out of which their victory came.

## XXII.

### THE LAMB OF GOD.

“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”

—JOHN i. 29.

*Germ Thoughts.*—We should carefully avoid bringing our elaborated theological notion of Atonement by a sacrificial death to this text, and then imagining that we find it *in* the text. We shall get at the highest truth by beginning at the lowest and simplest. We must endeavour to understand what meaning the Baptist put into the words when he used them, and what ideas the people who heard him would associate with the words. What appears to have been the most important feature of the Baptist's mission seems to have received the least attention. He came to spiritualise the conception of the coming Messiah ; and to convince men that He would come — first, in relation to their *sins* ; and, not first, in relation to their disabilities and sorrows. How difficult this work was, we can but very imperfectly estimate. What men really needed, and what they thought they needed, were two wholly different things. John tried to awaken a sense of real need, by awakening a sense of sin. It is easy to see, then, that when John pointed out the Messiah, his interest was wholly absorbed in His *character*. He does not see strength, the genius of the soldier or the patriot. He describes the Messiah,

who can deal with humble souls, penitent souls, souls burdened with a sense of sin, in a term which is a stroke of genius. He sees the *Lamb of God*. For men the Lamb embodies three ideas—purity, gentleness, and love. Nobody can deal with sin who is not himself pure. Nobody can deal with bruised sinners who is not gentle. And nobody ever will deal with sinners at all, who does not love them, and try to save them by loving them. John's insight saw the *genius* of Jesus when he called Him "The Lamb of God."

*Scripture References.*—Exod. xii. 3 ; Isa. liii. 7 ; Acts viii. 32 ; 1 Peter i. 19 ; Rev. v. 6. For "taketh away sin," see Isa. liii. 11 ; 1 Cor. xv. 3 ; Gal. i. 4. ; Heb. i. 3 ; ii. 17 ; ix. 28 ; 1 Pet. ii. 24 ; iii. 18 ; 1 John ii. 2 ; iii. 5 ; iv. 10 ; Rev. i. 5.

*Various Renderings.*—For "taketh," see as margin, "beareth the sin."—So Revised Version, margin.

*Exegetical and Expository Notes.*—*Crit. Com.*—Lamb of God—the one God-ordained, God-gifted, sacrificial offering—that taketh up, and taketh away, the sin of the world.

*Barnes.*—A lamb was killed and eaten at Passover. A lamb was offered in the temple every morning and evening. Messiah was predicted as a Lamb led to the slaughter. And a lamb among the Jews was an emblem of patience, meekness, and gentleness. On *all* these accounts Jesus was called the Lamb. "Of God"—appointed by God, approved by God, and most dear to Him.

*Neander.*—The image of the Holy One, suffering for His people, and bearing their sins, stood before John's soul as he uttered these words. The intuition to which he gave utterance, was simultaneous with the appearance



before his eyes of Christ's person, so gentle, so calm, and so meek ; and his conception of the idea of Messiah, in a prophetic spirit, reached its very acme. Yet we cannot define precisely the meaning which John himself attached to the words, for we cannot suppose in him a doctrinal conception of their import, such as a fully Christian mind would have. His was a prophetic intuition, bordering, indeed, on Christianity, but yet, perhaps, commingled with wholly heterogeneous elements.

*Olshausen* thinks Jesus is referred to as a Sacrificial Lamb led to death. The explanation of the words is superficial, which makes "lamb" a mere image of meekness, or of an innocent sufferer. It is an error to refer "taking away" to Christ's teaching, and not to His sacrificial death.

*H. W. Watkins, M.A.*—The Messiah, then, was the servant of Jehovah, the true paschal lamb of Isaiah's thought. While the heart burns with this loving truth that all men needed, and that one heart only knew, that same Form was seen approaching. It bears, indeed, no halo of glory, but it bears marks of the agonising contest, and yet the calm of accomplished victory. John looks at Him as He is coming, sees there, living and walking in their midst, the bearer of the world's sin and sorrow, and utters words than which in width and depth of meaning none more full have ever come from human lips. "Behold the Lamb of God," &c.

*Dr. Plummer.*—Evidently some lamb well known to John's hearers is meant—viz., the lamb of Isaiah liii.; but there may be indirect allusion to the Paschal Lamb. *Taketh away*; the marginal reading "beareth" is not right here. Sin is regarded as the one great burden or plague of humanity.

*Dean Farrar.*—Whether John understood the profound and awful import of his own utterance, or was carried by prophetic inspiration beyond himself we cannot tell. But this much is clear, that since his whole imagery, and, indeed, the very description of his own function and position, is borrowed from the Evangelical prophet, he must have used the expression with distinct reference to the picture of Divine patience, and mediatorial suffering in Isaiah liii. 7 (*cf.* Jer. xi. 10). His words could hardly involve less meaning than this—that the gentle and sinless man to whom he pointed should be a man of sorrows, and that these sorrows should be for the salvation of His race. Whatever else the words may have connoted in the minds of his hearers, yet they could hardly have thought them over without connecting Jesus with the conceptions of sinlessness, of suffering, and of a redeeming work.

“John felt in the delicacy of Christ’s personality all its capability of suffering, and its suffering destiny” (Lange).

*Dr. Edersheim* supports the view as given above by Barnes. He adds, “If further proof were required that, when John pointed the bystanders to the figure of Jesus walking towards them, with these words, ‘Behold the Lamb of God,’ he meant more than His gentleness, meekness, and humility, it would be supplied by the qualifying explanation, ‘which taketh away the sins of the world.’”

*Ecce Homo*, p. 5.—Before we enter into an examination of Christ’s own public career, it will be interesting to consider what definite qualities this contemporary and sagacious observer remarked in Him, and exactly what He expected Him to do. The Baptist’s opinion of Christ’s character, then, is summed up for us in the title

he gave Him—the Lamb of God taking away the sins of the world. There seems to be in the last part of this description, an allusion to the usages of the Jewish sacrificial system. But when we remember that the Baptist's mind was doubtless full of imagery drawn from the Old Testament, and that the conception of a lamb of God makes the subject of one of the most striking of the psalms, we shall see what he meant to convey by this phrase. The Psalmist describes himself as one of Jehovah's flock, safe under His care, absolved from all anxieties by the sense of His protection, and gaining from this confidence of safety leisure to enjoy, without satiety, all the simple pleasures which make up life, the freshness of the meadow, the coolness of the stream. The Baptist was no Lamb of God. He was a wrestler with life, one to whom peace of mind does not come easily, but only after a long struggle. He recognised the superiority of him whose confidence had never been disturbed, whose steadfast peace no agitations of life had ever ruffled. He did obeisance to the royalty of inward happiness. One who was to earn the name of Saviour of mankind, had need of this gift more than any other. He who was to reconcile God and man needed first to be at peace Himself. The door of heaven, so to speak, can only be opened from within.

*A. L. R. Foote.*—"Closing Scenes," p. 49. This sets before us the grand object of saving faith. We ought to dwell much more than we do upon the object of faith. We may discuss faith, and points of faith, in such a way as to lead the mind away from Christ rather than to Him. The way to produce faith is not to speculate about its nature, but to exhibit its object. "Behold," says the Baptist, as if anxious to arrest attention, and fix it on Him—"behold the Lamb of God." We now-

adays direct men to something called the atonement ; he pointed directly to the Atoning Lamb—the sin-bearer. The object of saving faith is the Lord Jesus Christ, in His whole person and work ; but He is here set before us in one of His characters only. It is in this character—as the Lamb of God—the awakened sinner is first attracted towards Him. Why is He called a “Lamb,” and why the “Lamb of God”? Lamb suggests the idea of sacrifice ; the idea of meekness ; the idea of innocence. “Lamb of God ” may be considered as referring to His dignity, and to His appointment to His work.

*Note by Editor.*—Compare the frequent figure of the “Lamb ” in the Book of Revelation. Carefully consider how far the use of this figure in the Apocalypse is consonant with John Baptist’s figure, and with the general design of the Apostle John, in writing his gospel.

*Sermons in Library.*—J. A. Alexander, D.D., “Gospel of Jesus Christ,” p. 48. John Flavel’s Works, p. 6. T. Manton’s Works, Vol. iv. p. 116. John Newton’s Works, Vol. iv. p. 184. Thomas Scott’s Works, Vol. iv. p. 389.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—To understand the mood of John’s mind, and the thoughts which found expression in this text, it is necessary to study not only the general mission of John as the prophet-preacher of repentance, but also the way in which John was led forward into deeper apprehensions of his mission. It is not enough to see that John called the people to repentance ; what we need to see is, that the change of mind he demanded was change of mind in relation to the expected Messiah. In awakening the sense of sin, John pleaded that the Messiah needed was a Saviour from sin. Men wanted a patriotic deliverer, bearing

relation to their outward circumstances. John made them feel that what they ought to want was a spiritual Saviour, who could deliver them from their bad selves. He proclaimed a Messiah who would take away *sin*, not a Messiah who would take away slavery.

It is clear that John himself grew in spiritual conceptions from the time of his coming into personal contact with Jesus. Not enough has yet been made of the personal influence of Jesus upon John. The order of the incidents is uncertain, but the following order appears to be reasonable. While John was baptising, Jesus approached and requested baptism. An intuition came to John that the man before him was the man whom he had been telling the people to expect almost immediately. If he was the Messiah then he was greater than himself, and homage was due to Him. A great impression of the dignified meekness of Jesus must have come to John, when Jesus pleaded that as a Jew all claims of God on Him must be fulfilled. At the baptism striking things were apprehended, at least by John. A Divine voice came, saying, "This is my beloved Son." While Jesus was away in the wilderness being tempted, John must have thought much over the impression made on him by these two things—(1.) The personality—personal character—of Jesus ; and (2.) The singular description of Him as "God's beloved Son." By-and-by Jesus returned to Jordan side, and John one day saw Him walking in an abstracted, thoughtful mood, and all alone. Then he found expression for the thoughts which had been brooding in his mind, and turning to his disciples, pointed them to Jesus, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." It is altogether most simple and natural to understand John as re-uttering the description of Jesus given at the Baptism, but using his own

figure. God the Father had called him "Beloved Son," John calls Him "Lamb of God," meaning "beloved of God."

Then show that John had clearly pointed out the limitations of his own work. He could awaken in men a sense of sin, but he could not take sin away. Another was coming who would do that. This was to be the mission of Jesus—delivering penitent souls from the penalty and the power of their sins. So we may paraphrase John's sentence in this way, "Behold the beloved One, sent by God to take away from you the sins of which you have repented." Jesus is God's Lamb; God's well-beloved; God's only-begotten. And this is the work that He is sent to do—to take away sin.

These are the points to open out and impress—1. Sin repented of is not, by the repentance, removed away. It is still the burden on conscience and heart. 2. It can only be taken away by forgiveness. Of that the penitent sinner needs to be assured. 3. He only can grant the forgiveness, who has won the right to grant it. Jesus has won the right. 4. When a sinner is forgiven, all his needs are not met. He wants a friend, a healer, a helper, a sanctifier. And only He can meet the needs who bears such a *character* as John embodied in his figure, the "Lamb of God."

It will be seen that this course of thought preserves all that is of real value in the theological associations of John's figure, but recognises a larger range of reference, and avoids assuming too much, in the use of a simple figure. Foote's point (see above) may well be made the closing impression. John fixed attention on the *person* of Jesus. That is first, and that is chiefest. "Look at *Him*. There is the man who is doing—about to do—what I have told you I cannot do—take away the sin of which you have repented."



## XXIII.

### THE FAITH IN ABEL'S SACRIFICE.

"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain."  
—HEBREWS xi. 4.

*Germ Thoughts.*—The excellence of a man's sacrifice is the mood of the man. The result of incoming sin on the human family was not immediate and absolute loss of the thought and knowledge of God ; for both Abel and Cain knew God, and recognised His direct relation to their worldly prosperity. The result of incoming sin was loss of harmony between man's spirit and man's body. The body no longer remained the mere medium and agency of the spirit, but demanded separate and independent allegiance. In Abel we see effort to preserve the harmony. In Cain we see a willing yielding to the disharmony. Now God does not pass over the beginning of this mischief. He commends the harmony in Abel. He rejects the disharmony, as it finds expression in Cain. In this first instance of religious act, God established for all time the law, that acceptable worship must have the *reality* of harmony between the soul and the body. That harmony is found in the soul gaining expression through the form. "By faith Abel offered."

The first form of human religion was bringing an offering to express thankfulness, and ensure Divine favour. It does not appear that Adam brought any offering while

he was in Paradise. Sin—*i.e.*, self-will—brought the distinction between *mine* and *thine*. Adam had nothing of his own; he saw all to be God's. Abel and Cain felt as if they had something that was their own, the produce of their own toil. So they made gifts to God.

In Cain we have heart-sin putting on evil forms in the earthly spheres and relations. The difficulty of sin is that it will not keep in the heart-sphere. It will show what a terrible *heart*-evil it is, by showing what a terrible *life*-evil it comes to be.

*Scripture References.*—Gen. iv. 4, 5; 1 John iii. 12.

*Various Renderings.*—"God testifying of his gifts," or, "in respect of, or over, his gifts." Read, "so still, even after his death." "Speaketh," or, "is yet spoken of." Revised Version reads the verse thus: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he had witness borne to him that he was righteous, God bearing witness in respect of his gifts; and through it he being dead yet speaketh."

*Exegetical and Expository Notes.*—I. On the passage in Genesis, chap. iv. 4, 5.

*Critical Commentary.*—Both Cain and Abel manifested by the very act of offering these gifts, their faith in the being and claims of God. Had the kind of offering been left to themselves, what more natural than that they should bring the offerings they did.

*Matthew Henry.*—"In process of time," Heb., "at end of days;" either at time of harvest, or ingathering; or, possibly on the Sabbath. The offerings were brought to Adam as patriarch, or king—priest for Jehovah. God may have given the testimony *to* Abel and *against* Cain by means of Adam. There was difference in the persons offering; difference in the offerings brought. Possibly in the *nature* of the offerings, but certainly in the *quality*.

Abel's being of the firstlings and the fat. The great difference, however, was the *faith* which Abel had, and Cain lacked.

*Dean Payne Smith.*—In Cain we see a rough, strong nature, who took the hard work as he found it, and subdued the ground with muscular energy ; in Abel a nature more refined and thoughtful, and making progress upwards. We must be careful not to introduce here any of the later critical ideas of sacrifice. All that we know about this offering is, that it was an act of worship, and apparently something usual. It is thought by some that Cain erred on technical grounds. It was the state of their hearts that made the difference. Abel may have shown a deeper faith in the promised Deliverer by offering an animal sacrifice ; and certainly the acceptance of his sacrifice quickened among men the belief that the proper way of approaching God was by the death of a victim. But Cain's unbloody sacrifice had also a great future before it ; for it became the *minchah* of the Levitical law, and under the Christian dispensation it is the offering of prayer and praise, and especially the Eucharistic thanksgiving.

In these, the earliest records of mankind, religion is built upon love, and the Deity appears as man's personal friend.

*James Inglis.*—It is not that, in consequence of his faith, Abel's sacrifice was the more excellent of the two, but that, having faith, he brought a sacrifice that was more excellent than his brother's. Faith cannot make that right which is wrong, or that obligatory which is not a duty. The excellence of faith depends very much on what is believed. Viewed in this light, Abel's sacrifice was accepted as being in obedience to Divine instructions.

[Readers will see that Inglis' view is a case of reading theology into Scripture.—ED.]

*Dr. Cunningham Geikie.*—The state of heart in each towards God determined the result. Abel had loving faith in God and His promise of mercy, and it is to be presumed that Cain had not. Geikie sees in Cain a sullen, self-willed, haughty, vindictive man, wanting the religious element in his character, and defiant even in his attitude towards God. But this is quite unnecessary. If such was Cain's natural disposition and temperament, his failure in this religious matter is very largely excused.

Geikie gives the following paraphrase of Gen. iv. 6, 7, from Kamphausen ("Studien und Kritiken," 1860, p. 120). "God thinks nothing of the outward worth of the gift, whether you bring what you think better than you have now offered, or present only thy field-fruits,—which you wrongly think have caused your rejection by their not being acceptable. God looks only at the heart. Guide thyself by this in the future. But your heart, as your conscience tells you, is already so corrupt, that sin like a fierce beast, threatens presently to destroy thee altogether."

*J. L. Porter, D.D., LL.D.*—There was an internal moral distinction in the minds of the offerers. Abel had faith, and Cain had not. Faith being "the substance of things hoped for" must have reference to a promise, and *the* promise on which the faith of God's people rested was that of Messiah. But Abel's sacrifice is described as "more excellent than Cain's. There was, therefore, also a distinction in the offerings. . . . Cain's was a mere thankoffering—an acknowledgment of temporal favours, without any recognition of human guilt, or of atonement destined to take it away. Cain, it would

seem, was a cold rationalist ; Abel was a faithful and devoted Christian. [Open to criticism.—ED.]

*Age of the Great Patriarchs*, p. 140.—This narrative sets before us the first beginnings of religion among men. It concerns the first distinctively religious acts. By "religion" we understand the personal effort, which a soul, consciously sinful, and consciously separate from God, makes to get back again to the Divine favour. When we speak of a man's religion we really mean his plan of trying to win his way back to God. Religion is only possible or necessary for a *fallen* creature. Cain and Abel, as fallen creatures, made an effort to find satisfactory and acceptable religious rites. In these two men we have the image of the two classes into which the world has ever been divided. In Abel we have the soul struggling for restored harmony, seeking to gain its restored rights. In bringing his offering he conquered so far as to make his bodily gift express his soul's gratitude, dependence, and faith. As he stood before God with his offering, body and soul were in harmony. In Cain, this harmony was wholly wanting. The bodily gift spoke nothing in behalf of the soul.

*Revelation by Character*, p. 5.—What, then, may we find was different in these offerings? If man had not sinned, the offerings of the two brothers would have been equally recognised and accepted. But man had sinned, and God had devised a redemptive scheme for man the sinner. This scheme had to be revealed ; it could not be found out in a natural way. It could only be revealed bit by bit. God was pleased to make use of these offerings of the brothers for giving a beginning of revelation concerning His redemptive scheme. . . . What also has to be seen is, that the way in which these brothers brought their offerings was far more important

than the kind of offerings they brought. The point of distinction may be thus stated. The one—Cain—offered a gift to God. The other—Abel—offered himself to God by means of a gift. And the opportunity was taken for sealing, once and for ever, the truth that the only offerings God can accept are gifts which carry to him the givers themselves.

On Hebrews xi. 4.—*Moses Stuart*.—On what account the sacrifice of Abel was more acceptable, commentators have speculated very much, and assigned a great variety of causes. But it may be asked, Does not this text contain a solution of this question? Abel made his offering in *faith*, the implication is, that Cain did not. [But Stuart does not make it clear whether the faith of Abel was *belief* or *trust*, and everything depends on this distinction. On ver. 1 he points out that in this chapter faith is belief, or confidence generally in Divine declarations, of whatever nature they may be. What we need to see is that faith here is no mere act of mind, but a cherished state of feeling. The deepest sense of faith is personal trust in God.—ED.]

*Sermons in Library*.—"Bible Children," p. 3; W. Enfield, "Sermons for Families," Vol. ii. 63; Bishop Sandford, Sermons, p. 1; E. Robson, M.A., Sermons, Vol. i. p. 128; Bishop Stillingfleet, Sermons, Vol. iv. p. 36.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon*.—In dealing with the narrative in Genesis, keep in view two things: 1. The brief, undetailed, and poetical form of the early tradition; 2. The impress which Moses, as editor, must have put on his transcript of it. Treat the narrative as giving illustration *by incident* of the great principles of religion which God designed to teach humanity. Then deal with this point—Lost trust in God is man's sin.



Recovered trust in God is the supreme purpose of man's redemption. How man goes further and further away into sin, misery, darkness, and death, when he loses his trust in God, may be fully illustrated. How man begins to recover when he begins to trust, and goes on recovering as he grows in trust, may be clearly shown. And then the mission of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the manifested Son, is seen to be, quickening dead trust; recovering lost trust; enabling man to trust. The gracious ways in which He fulfils this mission may then be pointed out.

Therefore in the very fore-front of God's revelation to men, this is made perfectly plain—the only thing that God can accept of man is his *faith*—his trust. This may find expression in anything and everything a man does, that stands in relation to God. This is the truth taught in our text. God's favour rests on man's faith. God does not care for things, but things are glorified when faith is at the heart of them, when faith is the life of them.

This subject may be treated so as to show that what is in a man's heart properly comes out, finds expression, and is searchingly tested in his acts of worship. Separate an act of worship from any meaning which the man puts into it, and the act becomes a worthless and offensive formality. Put a soul's meaning into the most trifling act of worship—the offering of two mites by a widow; the offering of a lamb by Abel; the offering of a few corn-ears and a few flowers by Cain—and it is sure to gain gracious Divine acceptance. Whatsoever is of faith is acceptable. Whatsoever is not of faith is sin. This is humanity's first and last lesson in religion.

## XXIV.

### FINDING OUT OUR NEIGHBOUR.

“But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?”—LUKE x. 29.

*Germ Thoughts.*—The various distinctions and separations of men into classes, castes, sects, schools, nations, races, &c., have their particular value and mission in relation to the progress, advancement, discipline, and culture of man. They are not mischievous, not to be regretted, and not to be feared so long as they are kept within reasonable limitations, and are permitted to influence by exciting a spirit of emulation. They are not mischievous even when they mean holding some aspect of truth in a narrow form, and with an absurdly tenacious grip; but they become mischievous whenever they are permitted to hinder men from exercising that universal charity, which is humanity's claim on all its members. Suffering breaks down all human limitations, brings together all separated ones. The man who is under any kind of disability or suffering is the brother, the neighbour of every man who has, or can get, the power to help him. The “milk of human kindness” leads us to claim every man in disaster or distress as our neighbour, no matter whether he belongs to our sect, caste, nation, race, or not. It is the mission of all true religion to restore and to re-establish humanity's supreme law of

brotherhood. "Thy neighbour! It is he whom thou hast power to bless."

*Scripture References.*—The law of our neighbour is given in Lev. xix. 18. The distinction between kindly sentiment, and doing good, is shown in Rom. x. 5. Neglect in time of sorrow is the complaint of Psalm xxxviii. 11. Relations between Jews and Samaritans is stated in John iv. 9. It rested on the fact that the Samaritans were a mixed race. Compare sentiment concerning Eurasians in India.

*Various Renderings.*—Ver. 29, "willing," used in the sense of "setting his will upon the endeavour" to justify himself. This is what was in his mind. Revised Version has "desiring to justify himself." Others put "wishing" instead of "willing." Ver. 36, "was neighbour—i.e., showed himself to be neighbour, by acting neighbourly."

*Exegetical and Expository Notes on the Parable.*—Dean Plumptre.—On ver. 29, The question implied a conscience half-awakened and uneasy. It is characteristic that no doubt seems to cross his mind as to his love to God. There he felt that he was safe. But there were misgivings as to the second commandment, and as if feeling that there had been a tone of rebuke in our Lord's answer, he vindicates himself by asking the question, "Who is my neighbour?" No one, he thinks, could accuse him of neglecting his duties to those who lived in the same village, attended the same synagogue, who were Pharisees like himself, or even Israelites.

On ver. 36, There is a subtle discernment in the form of the question, "Which now of these three?" The point under discussion was as to whom the Jew should look on as his neighbour. It is answered indirectly by the narrative, which showed who had proved himself a neighbour to the Jew. The Samaritan had shown himself

a better interpreter of the commandment than the orthodox Scribe. He had recognised a neighbour even in the Jew. The Jew therefore should recognise a neighbour even in the Samaritan. From the human point of view there is something noble in the manner in which our Lord thus singles out the Samaritan as a type of excellence, after His own recent repulse (chap. ix. 53), by men of the same race; something also courageous in His doing so, after He had been recently reproached as being Himself a Samaritan (John viii. 48).

*Dr. Whedon.*—Our Lord forces the man by the parable to confess that even a Samaritan may be, and is his neighbour. Neighbourship then depends not upon blood, or sect, or profession, but upon *humanity*. If the Samaritan in spite of his being a Samaritan, may, as a man with the true sympathies of a man, be “my neighbour,” then any being within the unity of the species, by his very being human, is my neighbour. . . . The lawyer finds himself placed upon that high platform by which the Divine law of love, ignoring the divisions of nations, grace, colour, unites mankind into one neighbourship and brotherhood.

*Archbp. Trench.*—The question of the lawyer was not asked in either a captious or a trifling spirit. Observe the fitness of our Lord’s answer to a *Scribe*. The question is already answered in the law which you are writing, The lawyer’s answer, putting his finger on the one great commandment, showed no little spiritual insight. Christ’s answer, “This DO, and thou shalt live,” touches the lawyer’s conscience. Christ in effect said, Bring this out of the sphere of uninfluential knowledge into living practice. The lawyer endeavours to justify himself by showing how narrow his conception of his neighbour was. The asking of his question was wrong, it indicated a wrong

state of heart. Any heart that wants to find out the limit to which its love must go, is a bad heart. Love is limitless. Force of our Lord's reply lies in this—it leads the lawyer to take his eye off from the object to which the love is to be shown, and to turn it back inward upon him who is to show the love. Christ's reply is really not to the lawyer's question, but to the spirit out of which the question was asked.

*Webster and Wilkinson.*—The priest exhibited selfishness instinctively; the Levite upon calculation. The first is a type of those who excuse themselves from all works of active benevolence, because they cannot endure the sight of misery. The second is a type of those who shrink from such works when they discover the amount of self-denial, labour, and expense, which keeping them would involve. The former are found principally in the higher classes of society.

*J. F. Vallings, M.A.*—The parable is, as it were, the foundation-stone of all Christian hospitals, and the equalisation in treatment of all sects and faiths within the walls, where Christian doctors and nurses often exemplify the power of His faith and fraternity.

*Dr. Pressensé.*—This parable draws, in all its breadth, the contrast between barren and selfish religiousness, and that Christian charity which, for eighteen centuries, has been bearing the burdens of humanity: "Thy neighbour is every suffering fellow-man," is the general burden of the parable.

*Dr. Edersheim.*—There is no occasion to impute directly evil motives to this lawyer. What we require to keep in view is, that to this lawyer the question which he propounded was only one of theoretic, not practical, interest, nor matter of deep personal concern, as it was to the young, rich ruler, who, not long afterwards,

addressed a similar inquiry to the Lord. . . . He wished to justify himself, in the sense of vindicating his original question, and showing that it was not quite so easily settled as the answer of Jesus seemed to imply. And here it was that Christ could, in a "parable," show how far orthodox Judaism was, from even a true understanding, much more from such perfect observance of this law as would gain heaven. Thus might He bring even this man to feel his shortcomings and his sins, and awaken in him a sense of his great need. . . . The parable implies, not a mere enlargement of the Jewish ideas, but a complete change of them. It is truly a Gospel parable, for the whole old relationship of mere duty is changed into one of love. Wouldst thou know who is thy neighbour? Become a neighbour to all by the utmost service thou canst do them in their need. And so the Gospel would not only abolish man's enmity, but bridge over man's separation.

*Olshausen.*—The answer of the lawyer was in itself satisfactory to the Saviour, but He directly urged him to follow out the command into action, remarking that life lay in the practical fulfilling of it. But it was by this precisely that the corruption within him was brought into view; his knowledge wanted that decision of the will fitted to carry it out into life, and this want of moral power again obscured his discernment. He asks, feeling himself struck, who then was his neighbour? A question which, in his own mind, he must have felt himself able to answer, if he had sought to exercise perfect love. Just because of his want of experience, Jesus transfers him into the midst of the realities of life, and makes him behold love actually loving. Love is not determined by its object, but has inherently in itself its own standard.



It was an obvious suggestion to trace in the compassionate conduct of the Samaritan a figurative representation of the Saviour's work.

*Dr. Marcus Dods.*—Our Lord does not directly answer the lawyer's question, but he shows, by an instance of the actual working of love, that it *makes* neighbours. It is not the defining of neighbours that gives us the definition of love, but the experience of love that defines for us who are our neighbours. It is this that our Lord teaches by the parable—that love, or a merciful spirit, finds a neighbour in every one that is in need, and can be helped; that no tie of kindred or obligation imposed by office is so keen-sighted in detecting a neighbour as love is. . . . While there are men whose lack of humanity empties their relationships, and every office they hold, of all service to others, save only what they are rigidly bound to by the letter of their engagements, and compelled to by the insistence or observance of others; there are also men whose love throws out sympathies on all sides, invents obligations where no claim could be enforced, and breaks through restrictions naturally hindering them from interference. So far from seeking excuse for not helping, they invent excuses for helping, or are unconscious that excuses are needed. Of this class of men the Good Samaritan is the immortal type—the once-drawn picture of the Master-hand that needs no added touch. It is love that makes man neighbour to man. Love does not ask, What claim has this man and that man on me? but, What does this man, or that man, need that I can do for him? . . . By loving men you enter into that state of spirit, and that relation to your fellowmen, which *is* eternal life, the only eternal relation possible. If we say, What are we to do for others? Our Lord has but one answer—

“Love them first of all, and see what will come of it.”

*Sermons in Library.*—Sterne's Works, p. 364. Sherlock on ver. 29, Vol. iii. p. 74. On ver. 25, Henry Smith (Platonist), Sermons, p. 474. Bishop John Butler's Sermons, p. 85. Sydney Smith's Works, Vol. iii. p. 167.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—The introduction naturally deals with two things. 1. The state of mind and precise intention of this questioner. 2. The details of the picture which forms the parable. The point which may gain enlargement and enforcement is, that the religion of Jesus Christ aims at the recovery of simple, sincere, genuine (unsophisticated) *humanity*. Show that if humanity were its original and genuine self it would be universally brotherly, and would never want to ask the question, Who is my neighbour? Then work out and illustrate fully the evil influences which have made humanity ungentle. Now its unity is broken up by conflicting interests. Now, a man's supreme concern being *himself* and his own interests, he is both blinded to the interests of others, and jealous lest the interests of another should adversely affect his own. Show how this germ of separation exaggerates into races, nations, parties, cities, classes, sects, families, businesses, ten thousand forms of rivalry that have made man unneighbourly, so that they need to ask, “Who is my neighbour?” Then show how the mission of the Lord Jesus is to re-unite all humanity, and how he does it by—I. Giving to men a new, a common, life. 2. By bringing men into a common relationship to God as sons. This “makes them all brothers. 3. By His sublime example of caring for others at the sacrifice of self; and

4. By enthroning *love*, in place of *self*. First love to God, and then love to all that is God's, and especially love for all whom God loves. God's love is a universal pity, and so should ours be. A pity which inspires sacrificing service.

## XXV.

### GOD THE CREATOR.

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”  
—GENESIS i. 1.

*Germ Thoughts.*—The mere existence of a God is not a proper subject of Divine revelation. In the Scripture, revelation is only made to those who already recognise a Deity. The belief of a God (a Creator, a Source of All Being) is a necessity of our constitution. My own existence is an all-sufficient proof of the Divine existence. A Creator is involved in the word “creature.” It is affirmed by our desire to worship, that there must be an object to worship. The sense we have of a difference between right and wrong, implies the existence of a standard authority, by whom our distinction is guaranteed.

But our idea of God, apart from His revelation of Himself to us, is necessarily imperfect and unsatisfactory. We must admit that the essential nature of God is not cognisable by human intelligence. The finite cannot measure the infinite. We can only know God in relations. And the relations must, in their very nature, at once limit Him, and reveal Him within the limitations. Our conception of God can be based upon nothing but His revelation. That revelation is given in the Divine operation, when the world was created and prepared for

the habitation of man, in the constitution of the human mind, in the arrangement of family life, *and* in the written Word.

God is not what a man may *think* Him to be, but what a man may learn that He is. An Atheist is almost an inconceivable conception. A Theist, or Deist, or Pantheist, may be regarded as, at least, conceivable.

Do not attempt to prove the being of God. By reading Creation, endeavour to clear, purify, enlarge, and make more worthy, the conception of God. Show that the harmony of the world can only come out of fulfilling—working out—the Divine thought and intention in Creation. What did God wish? Find that. Fulfil that—and earth is Heaven. The evils that have been, and still are, in the world, are but the broken harmonies, and hindered possibilities, caused by the resisting human wills, that refused to fulfil the Divine thought in Creation. The work of restoring broken harmony, recreating a violated order, is the generous and pitiful work of the one Creator. If He has arranged the restoration of the broken order, we, as His creatures, must be most sinful if we refuse to enter the recovered harmony, and to help in the full recovery of the harmony.

*Scripture References.*—John i. 1, 2; Heb. i. 10; Col. i. 15, 16.

*Various Renderings.*—Revised Version makes no change. Some would read, “In the beginning, when God created the heaven and the earth.” Others would make this sentence a superscription, or summary of the chapter, and begin the chapter itself, “Now the earth was waste,” &c.

*Exegetical and Expository Notes.*—*Critical Commentary on Chapter i.*—Verse 2.—“Without form and void,” emptiness and confusion, see Isa. xxxiv. 11.

"Moved," *lit.*, brooded, as fowl does in hatching. It is the assertion that the *preparation* for the present state was made by God.

Verse 3.—The new Creation begins with *this* verse. The details are described as by an onlooker. The Creation itself is a revelation in facts, so far as human intelligence might comprehend those facts. "God said," means that God willed, decreed, appointed. The question of the previous existence of the sun is not touched. The sun is here viewed as relative to the earth.

Verses 6-8.—"Firmament." A beating out, as of plate of metal. From the appearance to an observer, as of vault, supporting watery clouds. The air thus becomes a dividing of waters. This being its only *apparent* use is the one that is mentioned.

Verses 9-13.—Volcanic changes gathering the waters together. (Ps. civ. 6-9.) Notice that the three great divisions of the vegetable kingdom were not called into existence in the same way as the light and the air. They were made to grow, as they still do, out of the ground.

Verses 14-19.—Sun, moon, and stars *appear* as in the firmament; they are really distant from it.

Verses 20-23.—"Moving creature." All oviparous animals, both among finny and feathery tribes, remarkable for their rapid and prodigal increase. "Fowl" means every kind of flying thing.

Verses 24-30.—Terrestrial animals in three classes—cattle, beasts of the earth, and creeping things. By the "image of God," is not meant man's erect form, his features, intellect, or immortality; it refers to his moral disposition, or original righteousness. Compare Eph. iv. 24; Col. iii. 10.



*James Inglis.*—God. Heb. Elohim, a plural form. When applied to the true God, the verbs, or other qualifying terms, are almost always in the singular. Elohim, with plural qualifying terms, is applied to the gods of the heathen. Although it cannot be shown that the idea of Creation out of nothing is inherent in the original word, here rendered "Creator," it is obvious that the writer in this passage intends to teach that God brought the heavens and the earth into existence by His creative power. The "heaven and the earth" represent the universe. The Hebrew has no general term equivalent to our word universe; but it represents the same idea by an accumulation of particles. (See Neh. ix. 6.)

*Dr. Edersheim.*—An almost indefinite space of time, and many changes, may have intervened between the *Creation* of heaven and earth, as mentioned in verse 1; and the chaotic state of our earth, as mentioned in verse 2.

*Dr. Cunningham Geikie.*—"The first leaf of the Mosaic record," says Jean Paul, "has more weight than all the folios of men of science and philosophers." And he is right, for we owe to it the earliest and grandest revelation of that first principle of all religion—the existence, the unity, the personality, and the moral government of God. . . . Primeval revelations of God had everywhere become corrupted in the days of Moses. Egypt had, indeed, still a secret and mysterious doctrine of one supreme God, but it was strangely confused by polytheistic conceptions. He was, moreover, a mere abstraction; related to man, or the world only, as the Creator of the gods, who were emanations from Himself. . . . In language, the simplicity of which befits the remote antiquity in which it was uttered, the first verse

of the Bible declares the absolute and eternal distinction between the Creation and the Creator, and between the creature and Him who formed it. . . . The God of Moses stands in the strongest contrast with all conceptions of the Divine Being attained by unaided reason.

*Dean Payne Smith.*—Not, as in John i. 1, “from eternity,” but in the beginning of this sidereal system, of which our sun, with its attendant planets, forms a part. As there never was a time when God did not exist, and as activity is an essential part of His being, so, probably, there never was a time when worlds did not exist; and in the process of calling them into existence when and how He willed, we may well believe that God acted in accordance with some universal law, of which He is Himself the author. In the plural form Elohim, is included in one person, all the powers, mights, and influences by which the world was first created, and is now governed and maintained. However diverse may seem the working of the powers of Nature, the Worker is One, and His work One.

Creation, in its strict sense of producing something out of nothing, contains an idea so noble and elevated, that, naturally, human language could only gradually rise up to it. It is quite possible, therefore, that the word “*barâ*,” He created, may originally have signified to hew stone, or to fell timber; but, as a matter of fact, it is a rare word, and employed chiefly, or entirely, in connection with the activity of God.

*Kitto's Cyclopædia.*—The three words, Create, Form, Make, are used interchangeably, and are really indefinite as concerning previously existent matter. The Scripture references are to the attributes and perfections of Deity evinced in the work of creation. There is little attempt

at precise explanation of the *way* in which creation was accomplished. The question of creation as meaning absolutely "making out of nothing," is not a doctrine of Scripture, but a question of metaphysics.

It is important to observe the special adaptation of the Jewish cosmogony to the Jewish people. Here is a presentation of the Unity, Omnipotence, and Benevolence of the Creator ; but these are not presented as abstract philosophical propositions, but embodied in narrative, which asserts, in each individual instance, the power and goodness of God.

*Essays and Reviews.*—On Mosaic Cosmogony.—This essay is devoted to the working out and illustrating of a *foregone conclusion*. The writer shows the conflict between the various geological theories of Creation. He endeavours to show that the Mosaic conception is to be regarded as simply the best attempt made by man, and that it must not be reckoned for more than it is proved worth.

*Dr. Pye Smith.*—The narrative is expressed in a style suitable to the age, and in the idioms of the Hebrews, to whom the revelation was made. It describes the phenomena as they would have appeared to a human spectator.

*F. W. Robertson.*—The heavens were not God, the planets and stars were not God—they merely came from the hand of God. Therefore we are taught here this most important truth, the personality of God. Now for personality we should say that there were necessary three things—self-consciousness, will, character. You may have self-consciousness, and not be a person. Suppose the lake on which the sky is reflected were self-conscious, but incapable of moving, it would have no personality. Suppose a living thing with self-consciousness and choice, and nothing more, you will there only

have got an animal ; it would have self-consciousness and will, but not character. Therefore Moses tells us that God created the world in the first place in His self-consciousness, "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth ;" in the second place by will, for He said, "Let there be light ;" in the third place filling it, as He created it, with His character, for the Lord looked upon His world, and behold "it was very good." In other words He tells the personality of God.

*Dr. Abbott.*—Believers in a God will do wisely to waste no more time in discussing the existence of a God than they would waste in discussing wedded love, or filial reverence. Atheism may be safely left to be gradually destroyed by the irresistible arguments which Nature—that is God—is continually applying to us ; the experience of life, the birth and training of children, the requirements of the individual soul, and the necessities of national growth.

"*The Age of the Great Patriarchs,*" p. 35 and on.—Belief in a God is the first principle of religion. The acceptance of this belief changes moral systems into religions, and so glorifies them. Our eternal hopes rest on a declared fact which we cannot *know*, which we can only *believe*. "In the beginning, God."

In the opening chapter of the Bible there is no explanation of the Being of God. No statement even of His self-origination. No vindication of His unity. No declaration of His sole universal claims. His existence is simply assumed. The only thing stated is the absolute dependence of all creation upon His will. All that we can gather up into the spheres of earth, and all we can connect with the higher spheres of Heaven,—all is His handiwork, and the realisation, in sensible forms, of His Divine thought.

*Sermons in Library.*—Matthew Hole, D.D., "Church Catechism," Vol. i. p. 180. Dr. H. Blair, on "The Creation of the World," Sermons, Vol. iii. p. 391. Joseph Manton, "Lectures to Young Persons," p. 7.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—The late Dr. Falding had a sermon which took considerable public attention, based on the words, separated from their context, "In the beginning, God." It may, however, be doubted whether it is legitimate thus to break up a Scripture sentence. What this term affirms is, not what God *is*, but what God *does*. It does not say that in the beginning God was, but at a particular beginning God acted, created—created everything related to that particular beginning. Point out that if the existence of God were dependent on intellectual proof, it would have to be admitted that the intellectual faculties of man are incompetent to provide or apprehend the proofs. The Scriptures assume God, and speak to us as those who also assume it. The assumption is vindicated, because it is found to fit to facts and series of facts, so far as we can get to know them. All facts with which we are acquainted are found to be in harmony with the idea of a God. Show the unsatisfactory nature of all philosophical proofs of the Being of a God, both *à priori* and *à posteriori*. What is of interest to us is the relation of God to everything that is within the sphere of our cognisance. We are shut up to Him. He created Heaven and earth. There is no rival power. Then His claims on us are supreme. If God created the "heavens and the earth," then there is no place for—1. Other Gods; 2. Satan; 3. Idol-self. The answer which our Lord gave to the tempter in the wilderness is the answer which we, too, must give to all tempters, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

## XXVI.

### THE STERNER SIDE OF CHRIST'S WORK.

"Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel . . . that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."—LUKE ii. 34, 35.

*Germ Thoughts.*—Christ, coming to men in His humanity, as Jesus of Nazareth, or coming to men in a preached Gospel, as the Living Saviour, is the one great test of men's moral condition, of their attitude towards God. He is the revealer of all hearts : and, for the most part, the revelation is humbling—it would be hopelessly humbling were it not that the revealer is also the Redeemer ; and He only reveals and humbles as a necessary preparatory condition to redeeming. The sterner side of Christ's work is necessary ; but the necessity arises from His persistently carrying out the purposes of Divine love. A man must be brought to "know himself," as Christ only can show him himself, before he will even care to know what Christ can be, and would be, to him. Blessed are all they who have stood in the testing light of Christ and been shown up to themselves. He who falls in presence of Christ is surely raised up by the hand of Christ. He who probes also heals.

*Scripture References.*—The following help to illustrate or elucidate the figures of this text. Isaiah viii. 14, "And he shall be for a sanctuary ; but for a stone of



stumbling, and for a rock of offence." Hosea xiv. 9, "The ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them, but transgressors shall fall therein." Matt. xxi. 44, "Whosoever shall fall upon this stone shall be broken," &c. Romans ix. 33, "Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling-stone, and rock of offence." 2 Cor. ii. 16, "To the one we are a savour of death unto death, and to the other a savour of life unto life," 1 Pet. ii. 7, 8; same as Romans ix. 33.

*Revised Version.*—"That thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed." This clause presents the great exegetical difficulty of the passage. By ordinary punctuation it is dependent on ver. 34. According to the best modern commentators, it is simply dependent on what precedes. The mystery that the heart of the earthly mother was to be riven with agony in the death of her Son, involved as its end and object, the bringing out of the true characters and thoughts of men. The first clause of ver. 35 is not marked in the Revised Version as a paragraph in brackets.

*Exegetical and Expository Notes.*—*Pressensé.*—Simeon foretells at what a price the salvation of the world will be purchased. This feeble, new-born child shall divide mankind, and the thoughts of many hearts shall be revealed. He is set apart for many sorrows, and the soul of Mary, his mother, shall be pierced through with a sword.

*Dean Plumptre.*—Christ is seen by Simeon as the stone on which some fall and are bruised (chap. xx. 18), while others plant their feet on it, and rise to a higher life. Primarily, the clause speaks of the contrast between the two classes: but there is nothing to exclude the thought that some may first fall, and then, though sorely "bruised," may rise again (comp. Rom. xi. 11). . . . The whole history of our Lord's ministry—one might

almost say, of His whole after-work in the history of Christendom—is more or less the record of the fulfilment of Simeon's prediction. On second clause of ver. 35, Plumptre says:—This was conspicuously the result of our Lord's earthly ministry. It brought out latent good, as with publicans and harlots and robbers, rich and poor disciples, and the common people, who heard Him gladly; latent evil, as with Pharisees, Scribes, and Rulers. And what was true of His work then, has been true in greater or less measure ever since. Wherever Christ is preached, there is a manifestation of the thoughts of men's hearts, of their secret yearning after righteousness, of their bitterness against it. It may be noted, however, that the Greek word for "thought," is almost always used in the Greek with a shade of evil implied in it.

*Barnes.*—Many expected a temporal prince, and in this they were disappointed. They loved darkness rather than light, rejected the Christ who came, and fell into destruction. Many that were proud, were brought low by His preaching. They fell from the vain and giddy heights of their own self-righteousness, and were humbled before God, and then through Him rose again to a better righteousness and to better hopes. "Rising again," the word "again" is not expressed in Greek. "He shall be a *sign*—a conspicuous object to be spoken against, that the thoughts of many hearts may be made manifest? That is, that they might show how much they hated holiness. Nothing so brings out the feelings of sinners as to tell them of Jesus Christ.

*Dr. Whedon.*—"Is set," should rather be rendered "is laid," or "lies." It is a metaphor drawn from a stone over which some are seen stumbling and falling, and others are seen rising. So this child is the test by

which men stand or fall. The phrase "rising again" is better rendered "uprising." Christ is the test, by faith in whom men shall rise, or they shall fall in unbelief. "A sign," a mark against which calumny should aim its shafts. The test shall bring out the secret characters, the moral feelings and thoughts of men. It would show what by nature they are; what, by will and free agency, they make themselves.

*J. F. Vallings, M.A.*—The long musings of silent prayer, bosomed on Messianic hope, found voice (in Simeon) in divided accents, boding both light to all nations, and strife to Israel, breaking in twain, some to rise and some to fall. Simeon's own saddened experience of life in the harlot city; his ripe insight into the unfruitfulness and decay of leaders and people, his knowledge of contemporary Messianic political religion, formed the material which caught the spark of the spirit of prophecy as he spake of a divided Israel, and prepared Mary for the future of the *Mater dolorosa*.

*Dean Farrar.*—Simeon warned the Virgin-Mother especially, both of the deadly opposition which that Divine child was destined to encounter, and of the national perils which should agitate the days to come.

*Dr. Edersheim.*—Mystic, Simeon's words seemed, yet prophetic. But now it was the personal, or rather the Judaic, aspect which, in broken utterances, was set before the Virgin Mother—as if the whole history of the Christ upon earth were passing in rapid vision before Simeon. That Infant was to be a stone of decision; a foundation and corner-stone, for fall or for uprising; a sign spoken against; the sword of deep personal sorrow would pierce the Mother's heart, and so to the terrible end, when the veil of externalism which had so long covered the hearts of Israel's leaders would be rent, and

the deep evil of their thoughts laid bare. Such, as regarded Israel, was the history of Jesus, from His baptism to His cross: and such is still the history of Jesus, as ever present to the heart of the believing, loving Church.

*Olshausen.*—Simeon specifies more particularly Christ's work, which is viewed as separating and discriminating according to the conditions of men, and appears as causing ruin as well as blessing. A slight intimation of the path of sorrow by which the end must be attained is then appended (Luke xxiv. 26). The figure employed, to which the expression refers, is that of a stone, which becomes a "stumbling-block" to the proud, but, to the humble, a means of elevation from their low condition. The remark, that not *all*, but *many*, individuals among the people were affected by it may be thus explained:—So far as Christ's intention is concerned, all should be saved; but unbelief prevents the proper result. To many Christ is salvation, but to many He is ruin. . . . The revealing of the secret depths of the hearts,—of the good as well as of the bad—is declared to be the end of this discriminating, judicial work. Christ appears here as judge of the world, even during the progress of the human race; wherever He appears, His pervading agency compels to a decision for or against.

*Webster and Wilkinson.*—The meaning is not that those who fell should be recovered, but that some should fall to a lower state, and that others should rise from a worse condition to a better (John ix. 39). Three things in the passage:—1. The evidence afforded by Jesus and His works, of His Divine mission and character. 2. The opposition and rejection He would experience (Isa. liii. 3; John i. 11). 3. The occasion thus

given for the discovery of what is in the heart of man. Reasonings would be necessary in order to apprehend and receive the truth. Thus there would be disclosed the falsehood and wickedness of the human heart in arguing against the truth. The Gospel is a revelation to man, involving a revelation of man to himself.

*Matthew Henry*.—"Set for fall." There will be many whose sin and ruin will be aggravated by the revelation of Jesus Christ; many who will extract poison to themselves from the balm of Gilead, and split their souls on the Rock of Salvation. He shall be a sanctuary for some, and for a snare to others. "Thoughts of hearts revealed." Men will show themselves, discover, and so distinguish themselves. The Word of God is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

*Neander*.—The results of Messiah's appearance among men depend on their own spiritual dispositions. Salvation and doom are correlative ideas: all world-historical epochs are epochs of condemnation. Note the remarkable idea of Messiah which these words convey. Simeon does not conceive of Messiah's kingdom as triumphing at once by displays of miraculous powers, but rather as developing itself, after struggles with prevailing corruptions, and after a gradual purifying of the theocratic nation. The conflict with the corrupt part of the nation was to be severe, before the Messiah could lead His faithful ones to victory.

*Bishop Ellicott*.—In this passage there are two separate references—1. General. To the Jewish nation, and the opposed spiritual attitudes into which the Gospel of Christ would respectively bring those who believed and those who rejected. 2. The other special to the Virgin herself.

*Suggestions for Illustration.*—The Brazen Serpent brought a deeper condemnation to those who did not look.

See our Lord's teaching about Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, in Matthew xi.

The royal amnesty, in the time of rebellion, is for all, and it increases the guilt of those who keep their arms.

*Sermons in Library.*—J. C. Hare's Sermons, Vol. i. p. 129; Bishop Wordsworth's "Christian Boyhood," Vol. ii. p. 1; C. Simeon's Works, Vol. xii. 264; W. H. Mill's Sermons (Lent, 1845), p. 400.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—Let the subject be, Christ as the World's Test: the revealer of the thoughts of men. To use a familiar figure, the power that turns men inside out, and reveals themselves to themselves. In order to bring out the point, and force, and bearing of the passage, picture the scene in the temple court, and describe the prophetic vision of the future influence of Christ, as seen by Simeon, while he held the infant Jesus in his arms. Also recall the words of John the Baptist, "His fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor," &c. (See other Scripture illustrations.)

The idea of the text may be thus expressed:—Let this infant grow into a man, and the life He will live will prove the supreme moral test for humanity. Place Him in the midst of men, and He will show up who are true and who are false—who are gold and who are alloy. This test is virtually applied to everyone who hears the Gospel, and has Jesus Christ set forth, as if He were crucified among them. A man becomes another man from the time that he hears the record which God hath given concerning His Son. It is as if the chemical test had been applied to the unknown substance, and its character and quality are fully revealed. Let Christ,



the Light, shine upon a man, and the man's response makes an infallible revelation of what the man really is. If he walks in the light, he has fellowship with *the Light*.

Show how first the human Christ, and then the preached Christ, becomes a test. 1. In Christ is perfect virtue—perfect *human* virtue. That is exactly what every man *ought* to have attained. 2. In Christ was pure teaching. Therefore it proved so reproachful. 3. In the revelation of God's mind towards man. Man thought God hateful. Christ revealed His Fatherhood. and convicted men of wrong and unworthy thoughts. God would have us nigh ; He would not drive us away. 4. See Christ's infinite tenderness and grace. Nothing so humbles the hardened as to be dealt with in a spirit of patience and gentleness. The gentleness of Jesus finds out all who have really good characters, though they may have fallen into sin and woe. Such are sure to respond when the persuasions of Divine love come home to them.

As the world's test, Christ brings out all the gold purer ; and He discovers the hopeless worthlessness of all dross, that is fit for nothing but to be flung away. Have we come unto this testing? Can we stand it, if it is applied to us now?

## XXVII.

### REPROVING THE WORLD.

“And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”—JOHN xvi. 8.

*Germ Thoughts.* — It is important to notice that whatever our Lord meant by the word translated “reprove,” “convince,” or “convict,” it represents the work in the world which was to be done by the “other Comforter,” and therefore we may explain the work by that which was done by the *first* “Comforter.” What Jesus did, while in the flesh, He continued to do when in the Spirit. See the close connection between verses 7 and 8.

What is the Spirit, or indwelling God — working through, or as, Christ—actually now doing in us, and for us? That question this text in part answers. Our Lord had the greatest difficulty in getting His disciples to apprehend His teaching about the Spirit. Realise their state of mind, limited knowledge, and hindering associations, and it will at once be seen that *inworking* power was an idea quite beyond them. They were sense limited, but they were not scientific. Had they been, they would have known that the mightiest forces are forces at the heart of things, working secretly and silently. This is equally true in the natural and in the spiritual planes of being. What hindered the disciples

was not only their expectation of an earthly Messiah, but even more the manifest *materiality* of His presence when He came. They had Him with them in the body, and they could not conceive His presence with them as any other than a *bodily* presence. Our Lord strove earnestly to relieve their minds of this idea of the *necessary materiality* of His presence. He could be with them without being with them in a body. It is well worth observing how patiently, yet how skilfully, our Lord led them on in the upper room. "I will come to you;" "The world seeth Me no more, but ye see Me," &c.

The exigencies of human language compelled our Lord to speak of the Spirit as if it were another personality. The disciples were called to wait those ten days, that they might get the full impression of the truth that was unfolded in the Ascension. They must feel an *absence* before they could realise an abiding presence in a new form. There must be no mistake about the coming of the Spirit being Christ's fulfilled promise that He Himself would come again."

*Scripture References.*—Acts ii. 22-37; xxvi. 18; John iii. 14; v. 32. For word "reproof," see Matt. xviii. 15; Luke iii. 19.

*Various Renderings.*—Two other words are suggested as more suitable than "reprove." Marg. A.V. has "convince." R.V. reads verse thus, "And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." The difficulty of using the word *convict* is that it is not precisely the work of a Comforter, Advocate, or Paraclete. The verb ἑλέγχω is only used in Homer (Od. 21, 424; Iliad, 9, 518 or 522), and then meaning "to shame, to disgrace." Perhaps this shade of meaning would be helpful applied to the word in our text. Precisely what the Spirit does is *put to shame* the world. He shows the world to be in the wrong, and so shames it. "My Father" is better read "the Father."

*Exegetical and Expository Notes.*—*Webster and Wilkinson.*—ἐλέγχει means—1. Convince by proof. 2. Con-vict. 3. Reprove or rebuke. The Spirit would charge the world with sin, give proof of righteousness, and warning of judgment. In the Apostolic discourse given in the Acts, three subjects most prominent are—1. Christ is the only Saviour, and rejection of Him is fatal and damning sin. 2. Righteousness, or justification is through the exaltation or intercession of Christ. 3. The kingdom of Christ, in place of that of Satan, is established now, and to be perfected in the final judgment. The effect of Christ's manifestation is the defeat, dethronement, and final condemnation of Satan, and of all who belong to his kingdom. This judgment would be *progressive*, like the kingdom of Christ, with which in every epoch it synchronises. Illustrate this, by showing how every new triumph of Christ, direct or indirect, is a virtual judgment or condemnation of Satan and his principles—*e.g.*, Peace and War, Idolatry, &c.

*Matthew Henry.*—To convince is a law term, and refers to the office of the judge in summing up the evidence, and setting a matter that has been long canvassed in a clear and true light.

*Barnes.*—In these verses we have a condensed and most striking view of the work of the Holy Spirit. These three things comprise the whole of His agency in the conversion of sinful men. And in the accomplishment of this work, he still awakens, convinces, and renews.

*Dr. Plummer.*—The threefold office of the advocate towards those who do not believe but may yet be won over. To convince and convict is a large part of the duty of an advocate.

*Critical Commentary* on verse 10.—It is Christ's personal righteousness which the Spirit was to bring

home to the sinner's heart. The evidence of this was to lie in the great historical fact that He had gone to His Father, and was no more visible to men. The triumphant vindication of Christ's rectitude is to us Divine evidence, bright as heaven, that He is indeed the Saviour of the world, God's righteous Servant.

*H. W. Watkins, M.A.*—This conviction of the world is by witness concerning Christ. It is the revelation to the hearts of men of the character and work of Christ, and, therefore, a refutation of the evil in their hearts. The conviction of Christ's righteousness necessarily precedes that of the heart's own sin. The special reason of the conviction of righteousness is the resurrection and ascension of our Lord. In verse 11 the tense is perfect; "The prince of this world hath been and remaineth judged." The two kingdoms stand out in clear distinction. The power of the prince of this world is overcome by the opening of the kingdom of heaven to all believers. The King of Righteousness is in victory seated upon His throne, and claims mankind,—whose nature He has assumed, and whom He has redeemed,—to be free from sin and servants of righteousness.

*Dean Farrar.*—It was actually better for the disciples that His personal presence should be withdrawn in order that His spiritual presence might be yet nearer to them than it ever had been before. This would be effected by the coming of the Holy Ghost, when He who was now *with* them should be ever *in* them.

*Olshausen.*—This passage is one of the most pregnant with thought occurring in the profound discourses of Christ. In the word translated "reproof," the two significations of conviction and reproof penetrate each other. Three objects to which the "reproof" of the Spirit has reference, sin, righteousness, and judgment. 1. Sin is

discovered by the Spirit, not in its *externality*, in respect to which the Law awakens the knowledge of sin—Rom. iii. 26—but in its deep internal root. This is nothing less than unbelief, the mother of all sinful actions. But unbelief, in its most dangerous and glaring form, is unbelief *in the Christ who has appeared*. The incapacity to recognise the purest manifestation of deity presupposes entire blindness. 2. As the Spirit unmask the negative side so, in the second place, He discloses the positive—viz., Righteousness. If the connection had been kept in view, there would not have been so much difficulty in explaining the passage. Nothing is more natural than that the insight into sin should be succeeded by a view of that condition in which sin is removed—*i.e.*, righteousness. The Spirit convinces both of sin and of righteousness; for He shows how the Redeemer, although corporeally invisible, yet inwardly operates, and perfects the inward life. The reformers, Luther, Melancthon, and Calvin, think by “righteousness” is meant “justification by faith.” 3. Judgment. As the element to be separated, the “prince of this world” is named. The Redeemer views him and his influence and his kingdom, as already judged, for here (see Luke x. 18) He looks upon His own work as finished. However, the judgment respecting the world of evil does not mean merely the future concluding scene of the world’s development. It goes on invisibly in the hearts both of believers and unbelievers. Of believers as, judging themselves, they separate evil from themselves. Of unbelievers as, fleeing from the light, they withdraw themselves from its benignant influence.

*Sermon Notes.* —Dr. H. Bushnell, “*Christ and His Salvation*,” p. 98.—A most valuable and suggestive sermon on



"Conviction of Sin by the Cross," enlarging on and illustrating this point—That our Lord's mission to the world will have a considerable part of its value in raising a higher moral sense in mankind, and producing a more appalling conviction of their guilt, or guiltiness, before God.

*Sermons in Library.*—Charnock's Works, Vol. iv. p. 164. Sibbes, Vol. vii. p. 357. Bossuet's Sermons, Vol. ix. p. 101. St. Augustine's Sermons, "Library of Fathers," Vol. xx. p. 670. G. Whitefield's Works, Vol. vi. p. 127.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—The Spirit's work was the proper continuance of Christ's earthly work. We easily see this in relation to the Comforter; the Spirit is the *other* Comforter. The text suggests other spheres. I. Conviction (or reproof) of sin. This is wrought because they do not believe on Christ as Messiah. The presence of the risen, living, spiritual Christ is the all-sufficient proof of His Messiahship; and consequently it involves the conviction, in the sense of condemnation, of all who, in face of such proof, still persist in denying His claim. What comes out quite clearly is that they must be blinded by their own sinful self-will. II. Conviction of righteousness. Christ could not be said to "come again" until he had gone away. He might have so "gone," that we should have had left us no attestation of the righteousness of His life. But if he came again, in the power of the Spirit, it could only be because God had accepted Him, and attested His righteousness. III. Conviction of judgment. "Prince of this world is judged." What the prince of this world did was, try and make Christ "please Himself." If Christ comes again as the Spirit, then it is clear that God had accepted the man who did *not* please himself. And the world-prince is condemned, for it is clear that he did not succeed, and equally clear that, in tempting

Christ, he was not in the Divine favour. Notice how this appealed to the disciples, who were bound up in the Maccabean idea of Messiah, and believed only in physical energy and force. Christ's triumph pledges that all men may master self-pleasing, and live in perfect obedience to the will of God. The mistake the prince of this world made with Christ is the mistake he makes with men. He is judged as a false adviser and ruler.

All this is guaranteed in the living and abiding presence of Christ in believers, as the Holy Spirit. Will these three things be permanent results? Is this just what the living Christ is now doing? Yes—a part of His work; but it may not be regarded as the whole. 1. The Spirit in us is sensitising conscience. 2. Inspiring ambition. 3. Directing service. What Christ, present with disciples, in moral influence *was*, that Christ, present in the Spirit, *is* to-day. Do we watch for signs of His working? Do we watch lest we hinder His working? Do we expect great things in the spiritual life, because we have the Spirit's presence?

## XXVIII.

### THE UPLIFTED SERPENT.

“Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole : and it shall come to pass, that everyone that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.”  
—NUMBERS xxi. 8.

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up : that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”—JOHN iii. 14, 15.

*Germ Thoughts.*—All God’s blessings for men are dependent upon men’s preparedness to receive them, and this is especially true of His greatest blessing of moral redemption. On the one side, God will not bestow, unless His blessing is both needed and wanted ; and on the other side, man does not care to receive unless, in humility of heart, he is prepared to receive. This may be effectively illustrated in relation to the forgiveness of an injury, or wrong that may have been done us. It is of no use to forgive us—it will not do us any good—if we are still hardened and full of enmity. And we do not care about being forgiven unless we are feeling sorry that we have done the wrong. If then a prepared state of heart is the condition of Divine blessing, God may be expected to *test* the state of our heart before bestowing His blessing. And just this *testing* is what we have in connection with both these texts. Were the Israelites in a fit mind for healing ? Test it by their looking up at the brazen serpent. Are men now in a fit

mind for soul-healing? Test it by their look up to the Lamb of God, the uplifted and crucified Son of God. Every man is revealed by his answer to the question, "What think ye of Christ?"

*Scripture References.*—For the destruction of the Brazen Serpent, see 2 Kings xviii. 4. For the figure of "Lifting up," see John viii. 28; xii. 32. For life through believing, see John iii. 36; vi. 47; 1 John v. 10-12.

*Various Renderings.*—Revised Version, "That whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life," omitting "should not perish," see verse 16.

*Exegetical and Expository Notes.*—I. On Numb. xxi. 8, 9. *Dean Stanley.*—The serpent of brass that Moses had made was long cherished as a sacred image in the sanctuaries of Judah and Jerusalem. Incense was offered to it, and a name conferred on it; and even after its destruction by Hezekiah, the recollection of it was still so endeared to the nation, that from it was drawn one of the most sacred similitudes of the New Testament; and even the Christian Church claimed for centuries to have preserved its very form intact in the church of S. Ambrose, at Milan. The snakes against which the brazen serpent was originally raised as a protection, were peculiar to the eastern portion of the Sinaitic desert. There, and nowhere else, and in no other moment of their history, could this symbol have originated.

*Dr. Cunningham Geikie.*—In forgetfulness of the supply of all their wants for so many years, bitter reproaches rose against God and Moses. But the region itself provided a terrible punishment for such disloyalty and rebellion. Venomous serpents abounded in it. Captain Frazer tells us that "all the Arabs say there are flying serpents there, three feet long, very venomous,

their bite deadly; they have no wings, but make great springs. Mr. Churton, when south-west of the Dead Sea, fell in with a large red-coloured serpent, which came out of a hollow tree, and was declared by the Arabs to be poisonous." Schubert tells us that "a large and very mottled snake was brought us, marked with fiery red spots and stripes. From its teeth it evidently belonged to one of the most poisonous kinds. The Bedouins say that these creatures, of which they are in terror, are very numerous in this locality."

*C. J. Elliot, M.A.*—Some think the serpents are called fiery, because of their inflammatory and poisonous bite. The meaning of the type is thus explained in the "Book of Wisdom." "He that turned himself toward it was not saved by the thing that he saw, but by Thee, that art the Saviour of all" (chap. xvi. 7).

2. On John iii. 14, 15. *Dr. Whedon.*—Nicodemus doubtless understood that Jesus was to be held up, and manifested to the world; but he did not understand, so prematurely as sceptics think, that Jesus was to die substitutionally for the sinner. As the sinner is bitten by the infernal serpent, so the people of Israel were bitten by the fiery serpent. As Moses raised up the brazen serpent on a pole, so Jesus is raised upon the cross. As the brazen serpent was in the likeness of the fiery serpent, which is Satan's likeness, so Jesus is in the likeness of sinful flesh. As the bitten Jew was required to look at the brazen serpent, so the sinner is required to look by faith to Jesus.

*Dr. Edersheim.*—Then came the judgment of the fiery serpents, and in answer to repentant prayer, the symbol of new *being*, a life restored from death, as they looked on their no longer living but dead death lifted up before them. A symbol this, showing forth two

elements: negatively, the putting away of their past in their dead death (the serpent no longer living, but a brazen serpent); positively, in their look of faith and hope. Before this symbol, as has been said, tradition has stood dumb. It could only suggest one meaning, and draw from it one lesson. Both these were true, and yet both insufficient. The meaning which tradition attached to it was, that Israel lifted up their eyes, not merely to the serpent, but rather to their Father in heaven, and had regard to His mercy. This, as St. John afterwards shows (ver. 16), was a true interpretation; but it left wholly out of sight the Antitype, in gazing on whom our hearts are uplifted to the love of God, who gave His only-begotten Son, and we learn to know and love the Father in His Son. And the lesson which tradition drew from it was, that this symbol taught, the dead would live again, for, as it is argued, "Behold, if God made it that, through the similitude of the serpent which brought death, the dying should be restored to life, how much more shall He, who is Life, restore the dead to life." And here lies the true interpretation of what Jesus taught. If the uplifted serpent, as symbol, brought life to the believing look that was fixed upon the giving, pardoning love of God, then, in the truest sense, shall the uplifted Son of Man give true life to every one that believeth, looking up in Him to the giving and forgiving love of God, which His Son came to bring, to declare, to manifest.

*Dean Farrar.*—The uplifting is both literal and metaphorical. Uplifted on the cross; exalted in the kingdom. . . . The salvation of man is rendered possible by the sufferings and exaltation of the Son of Man.

*Dr. Plummer.*—On ver. 14. We have here some evidence of the date of the gospel of St. John. The



Ophitic is the earliest Gnostic system of which we have full information. The serpent is the centre of the system, at once its good and evil principle. Had this form of gnosticism been prevalent before this gospel was written, this verse would scarcely have stood thus. An orthodox writer would have guarded his readers from error, an Ophitic writer would have made more of the serpent.

*H. W. Watkins, M.A.*—The people in the wilderness bitten by the fiery serpents, the poison virus spreading through their veins, and causing burning pain, torpor, and death—this was symbolical of the world lying in the misery, restlessness, and spiritual death, which came from the Serpent's victory in Paradise. Nicodemus must have understood that the healing power of the serpent of brass was in the fact that it led men to trust in Jehovah, who had appointed it. This was the current Jewish interpretation. It was the sign of the eternal in power and in love present to save, and the man who realised that presence lived with a new life. In the Divine counsels it was willed, and must be, that the Son of Man should be the witness to the world of the Eternal power and love which saves every man who grasps it.

*Olshausen.*—It may be questioned whether the comparison of Christ and the serpent consists merely in the elevation, or also in the form of the serpent. According to Romans viii. 3 it seems most probable that both are combined. The serpent is regarded as a symbol of the sinful nature to which the Redeemer in His incarnation assumed resemblance. Accordingly the remedy appeared in the form of that which was to be healed.

*Matthew Henry.*—Resemblances between the case of Israel and our case. 1. Between their disease and ours. 2 Between their remedy and ours. (I.) God

Himself devised it. (2.) It was a very unlikely method of cure. (3.) That which cured was shaped in the likeness of that which was wounded. (4.) Both were lifted up. 3. Between the application of their remedy and ours. Looking, believing. Christ is "lifted up"—1, in His crucifixion; 2, in His exaltation; 3, in the publishing and preaching of the Gospel.

*Neander.*—Startling to Jewish modes of thought, that Christ was to found the salvation of the world on the basis of His own sufferings. Jesus did not announce this truth in its full breadth to Nicodemus. He employed a figure from the Old Testament. The brazen serpent may have appeared to the fathers a paradoxical cure for the serpent's bite; and such a paradox is the salvation of the world through a suffering Redeemer.

*Critical Commentary.*—On John iii. 3. This blunt and curt reply meant to shake the whole edifice of this man's religion, in order to lay a deeper and more enduring foundation. He has started a question he is unfitted to solve, and before approaching it, his spiritual nature must undergo an entire renovation. On ver. 14. In both cases the remedy was conspicuously displayed, in the one case on a pole, in the other on a cross. In both cases it is by directing the eye to the uplifted remedy that the cure is effected. As the serpent was God's ordinance for the cure of every bitten Israelite, so is Christ for the salvation of every perishing sinner. The one, however, a purely arbitrary ordinance, the other divinely adapted to man's complicated maladies.

*A. L. R. Foote.*—"Incidents in the Life of our Saviour," p. 113. The wounded Israelites did not speculate about the reason why God chose the brazen serpent as the channel through which "He might transmit His healing power; they did not spend their

time in inquiring, "Is it for us?" "Is it for some?" "Is it for all?" They were too ill for that. Prompted by a feeling of pain and danger, they at once complied with the command, and availed themselves of the remedy, and every one who did so had, in his own actual experience, a proof he could not otherwise have had, that it was indeed for Him, in the fullest sense of the expression. And so will every sinner act who is really alive to his danger. He has no time, no inclination to speculate, and pry into the secret counsels of Heaven.

*Sermons in Library.*—On Num. xxi. 7-9. C. Simeon, Works, ii. p. 126; R. Hawker, D.D., Works, v. p. 445; T. Erskine, "The Brazen Serpent," 2nd edition, 12mo. Lond. 1831; Bishop Hacket, Sermons, p. 823.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—With descriptive work, estimate carefully the original scene in the wilderness, and especially observe that this provision of the uplifted brazen serpent was God's gracious way of meeting a *humbled* and *repentant* people. This point is of extreme importance. No action was taken in relation to the distress caused by the venomous serpents until that distress had awakened in the people a sense of sin—their special sin of untrustful murmuring—and had brought them, in a penitential and anxious spirit, to seek Moses, and persuade him to intercede with God for them. "Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, we have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that He take away the serpents from us." Now this was the right frame of mind for them to be in. But was it more than a passing emotion, was it sincere, was it deep, was it likely to influence their future conduct? That must

be tested, and so assured, before deliverance and healing could come. The brazen serpent, well in sight, on the pole, was made the means of securing this test. If they were what they professed to be, they would obey, they would do exactly what they were told to do. Humility obeys. Penitence is anxious to obey. Hearts that have really returned to God are quick to know God's will, and earnest in obeying it. All truly humble souls would look up at the Brazen Serpent, and in obedience find healing and life.

It will be easy to show how, in this, is given a type of the conditions on which moral redemption alone is possible. The following are simple divisions, which open up the subject. I. The ground of man's acceptance with God is his moral state. Of course, this is looking at the matter from man's side. A man cannot be morally redeemed until he is made, so far, morally ready for redemption, in humility, penitence, confession, and desire. II. A man's moral state can only be known by some testing. For this a very simple thing may suffice, and it may be all the more effective by reason of its simplicity. The test provided is the presentation to man's thought and heart of the Son of God. What attitude do men take in relation to Him? That reveals them. That shows whether they are fit to receive Divine redemption. III. The Divine acceptance is gained, not through the test, but by reason of that moral state which the test brings into view. We are not saved *by* looking up at Jesus; we are saved *because* we look up. That reveals and shows that God may work His work of grace in us.

## XXIX.

### THE PARABLE OF THE TARES.

“Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.”—MATT. xiii. 36.

*Germ Thoughts.*—Distinguish between two kinds of evil. It is not seriously perplexing that there should be evil—in the sense of calamity, disability, strain—arising purely out of circumstances in which we may be placed. The really perplexing thing is that God should permit evil—in the sense of disappointment, difficulty, and disaster—to arise through actions behind which is some malicious self-will. This is the case presented by our Lord in the parable. Somebody’s malice sets going a train of evils. Somebody’s malice is *always* starting some fresh train of evils. Then the question arises, why does not God at once deal with those evils and remove them out of the way. Our Lord’s answer is, that it is good for His people that these evils should be left, while He has to do a disciplining and sanctifying work in them. They are just the things which He can use as His agencies. But His people need have no undue anxiety concerning them. They have no permanency. They are under strict limitations of time, and what they are will be revealed one day, and their fate may even now be confidently anticipated.

Some of the difficulty felt in explaining this parable would be removed if we saw its sphere to be *things*, not

*persons.* The actions of good men and the actions of bad men go on together, unfolding their influences side by side. It would seem that the idea of the parable referring to *persons* rests on the expressions in ver. 38, "Children of the kingdom," "Children of the wicked one." But this was one of the most familiar forms of pictorial Jewish expression. A man's thoughts, a man's actions, what he produces in the material spheres are figuratively spoken of as His *children*.

*Scripture References.*—Matt. xxiv. 14; xxviii. 19; Mark xvi. 15, 20; Luke xxiv. 47; Rom. x. 18; Col. i. 6; Gen. iii. 15; John viii. 44; Acts xiii. 10; 1 John iii. 8; Joel iii. 13; Rev. xiv. 15. See also Matt. xviii. 7; 2 Peter ii. 1, 2; Rev. xix. 20; xx. 10; Matt. viii. 12; Dan. xii. 3; 1 Cor. xv. 42, 43, 58.

*Various Renderings.*—For "tares" read "darnel." Ver. 25 for "sowed" read "sowed beside," or "over sowed." Ver. 29, "world" would be more correctly "world-age." Ver. 41, "things" or "scandals" offend, or "cause stumbling." Ver. 42, "a furnace" should be "the furnace," "the wailing"—i.e., the great wailings.

*Exegetical and Expository Notes.*—*Dr. Whedon.*—This parable explains the entire structure of the system of probation under the Christian dispensation, or perhaps through all time. It is not so much a parable of the Church as of the world and the Church under the Messiah, for the field is the world. [It does not appear that our Lord ever made the distinction between the "Church" and the "world," with which we are familiar.—ED.] While probation lasts, wickedness (action inspired by self-will) is permitted to develop itself. The parable is a brief, simple moral history of the world. The tare (darnel) abounds all over the East, and is a great nuisance to the farmer. The notion that tares are degenerate wheat is based on imperfect observation. A



wet season is favourable to the tare and injurious to wheat. So the ground *apparently* brings forth tares for wheat seeds. The difficulty of thinning out the tares lies possibly in a similarity of the earlier forms of the two plants, but certainly in the remarkable intertwining of the roots.

On vers. 37-42. The sower is the Redeemer, the field is not the Church but the world; the good seed are the Christians, the tares are the wicked, their sower is Satan. At the end of the world the angels shall gather out the harvest of wicked men to cast them into the blaze of retribution.

*Barnes* says: The field represents the world in which the Gospel is preached; the "good seed," the truths preached by Christ and His apostles. "Tares" are false doctrines, false sentiments. But with some inconsistency he also makes the tares "aptly represent hypocrites in the Church."

*Dean Plumptre* on vers. 25, 26.—"His enemy came and sowed tares." The act described was then, and still is, a common form of Eastern malice or revenge. It was not until fructification began that the difference between wheat and tares was easily detected. Primarily we must remember that the parable refers to the kingdom of heaven—*i.e.*, to that new order of things which Christ came to establish, and which is conveniently described as the Church which owns Him as its Lord. It offers, accordingly, an explanation of the presence of evil in the Church, and only by inference and analogy does it bear upon the wider problem of the origin of the evil in the world at large. . . . Doubtless evil is to be checked and punished alike in the Church and in civil society, but it is not the work of the rulers of either to extirpate the doers." What the parable condemns is

the over-hasty endeavour to attain an ideal perfection, the zeal of the founders of Religious Orders, of Puritanism in its many forms. Ver. 41, "All things that offend," lit., "all stumbling-blocks."

*Suggestion on Verse 43.*—If the references are to things, not persons, this verse means that the goodness of the good is in danger of being wrongly estimated, undervalued, while it is blended with the badness of the bad. That goodness will *shine out clearly* when the badness is wholly removed. It can then be properly estimated as *what it is*.

*Archbp. Trench.*—The exposition of this parable brings us into connection with the Donatist controversy. Compare "Parable of the Sower," where the good seed is the "Word of God," with this parable, where the good seed is "children of the kingdom." Indian and Irish illustrations of enemy sowing tares are given in "Parables," p. 88. The expression, "while men slept," should not be spiritualised. It is only equivalent to "at night;" there is no intimation of negligence.

Wheat tares are not seed of different kinds: the last is a degenerate and bastard wheat, appearing much alike while in the blade, and only distinguishable when the ear is formed, illustrating forcibly Christ's remark, "By their fruits shall ye know them." St. Augustine notices that it is only the opposition of good that makes evil to appear. "None appear evil in the Church except to him who is good." . . . The temptation is strong to use outward power for the suppression of error: a temptation the Church has ever found it impossible to resist. . . . The words seem to tell us that evil is not gradually to wane and to disappear before good, the world to be absorbed into the Church, but it is ever to develop itself more fully, even as, on the other side, good is to enfold

itself more and more mightily also, till at last they stand face to face, each in its highest manifestation, in the persons of Christ and Anti-Christ.

*Neander on Tares.*—"Life of Christ," p. 203. Christ had to teach His disciples that not all who joined Him were fitted to be genuine followers, and that the spurious and true should be intermixed in His visible Kingdom, until that final process of decision which God had reserved to Himself. The special object of the parable was to warn His disciples against arbitrarily and impatiently anticipating the Divine wisdom, which guides all the threads of the Church's progress to one aim: against attempting to distinguish the spurious from the genuine members, before that final sifting of the kingdom which God Himself will make. To teach them that men have no means of making such decisions unerringly, and might cut off, as false, some who were, or might become, true subjects of the kingdom.

*Olshausen.*—All violent interference with the course of life led by the sinful members of the Church, and all arbitrary efforts to realise the absolute purity of communion on earth, are here forbidden. There is no intention to prohibit admonition, or appropriate Church discipline, or any other method of dealing with the lives of sinful members of the Church, if only not forcible in their nature.

*Dr. Edersheim.*—The Jewish hearers of Jesus would think of these tares as degenerate kind of wheat, originally sprung at the time of the flood, through the corruptness of the earth, but now, alas, so common in their fields; wholly undistinguishable from the wheat, till the fruit appeared; noxious, poisonous, and requiring to be separated from the wheat, if the latter was not to become useless. . . . True to life as the picture is, yet the

parable was, of all others, perhaps the most un-Jewish, and therefore mysterious and unintelligible. Already tares had been sown right into the midst of the apostolic band—one of them was a traitor. . . . The disciples had to learn the lessons of faith and patience, connected with the fact that the good seed of the kingdom grew in the field of the world, and hence, that by the very conditions of its existence, separation by the hand of man was impossible, so long as the wheat was still growing. Yet that separation would surely be made in the great harvest.

*Dean Farrar.*—These seven parables illustrate the various reception (the Sower) ; the mingled results (the Tares and the Net) ; the priceless value (the Treasure and the Pearl) ; and the slow, gradual extension (the mustard-seed, the leaven, and the springing corn), of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

*Canon Liddon's Bampton Lecture.*—It might be antecedently supposed that, within the limits of the new kingdom, none were to be looked for save the holy and the faithful. But the parable of the tares corrects this too idealistic interpretation ; the kingdom is to be a field in which, until the final harvest, the tares must grow side by side with the wheat. . . . There is a difference in kind between the good seed of the kingdom, and the tares of the wicked—origin, principle of life, fruitage. It may accord with God's plan that the two should be together for a while—for the world's sake, for the sake of the children of the kingdom. Especially God forbids forcible separation now, because another truth is, that in the power of God tares may become good wheat. The two must at last be finally and eternally separated. The difficulty of that final separation shall partly be removed by the fact that God Himself shall do it.

With Him is infinite discernment of actual moral disposition.

*Dr. Marcus Dods.*—In this parable Christ warns His servants against expecting to see in this world that un-mixedly good condition of society which will at length be brought about in the world to come. Those who are themselves within this kingdom must beware of acting as if the final judgment were already passed. At all times those who believe in God have been perplexed by the fact that this world is so far from a condition of un-mingled good. Is it not God's world? Whatever has proceeded from Him can have been only good. Christ comes and inaugurates a new order of things and (surely) all evil will disappear from earth. Alas! the failure of the harvest of God is in many respects even more conspicuous in the Church of Christ than in the non-Christian world. It is within Christendom we must look if we would see some of the worst specimens of human iniquity. One is ashamed to read the history of the Church. The explanation of this disappointing state of matters is given in the words, "An enemy hath done this." It is not the result of Christianity, but of agencies opposed to Christianity.

It is not always easy to know how far we should act upon the acknowledged fact of a man's ungodliness. This parable enjoins upon us the necessity of refraining from acting upon the distinction between the good and the evil to the injury of any. Punishments must be inflicted by society upon its injurious members, but not on the score of their ungodliness, or unprofitableness in Christ's kingdom. The reasonableness of this method of delay is sufficiently obvious. Our Lord assigns reasons for abstinence from immediate action. You are not to root up tares because you will inevitably root up

good corn with them. And the time is coming when the distinction between the wheat and the tares is to be acted upon. Everything must ultimately find its place according to its nature. Each of us is growing to something, and from some root.

*Sermons in Library.*—C. Simeon, Vol. xi. p. 408; T. Gisborne, Sermons, Vol. ii. p. 176; Sydney Smith, Sermons (1809), Vol. i. p. 173; G. Burder, "Village Sermons," p. 8; Bishop Newton, Works, Vol. iv. p. 319.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—Describe the kind of picture known as a Triptich. When a whole thing cannot be presented at once, a front and two sides may be given in order to convey a complete impression. Parables are really side views of the "Kingdom." Each does but carry a part or piece of truth. Full satisfaction can alone be gained when the teachings of the whole series can be grouped, as it were, to form one picture. What needs to be noticed is, that one part of teaching may even seem doubtful, and incomplete, until it is toned and qualified by the teachings of other parables. There is grave danger of over-forcing meanings in connection with this difficult parable of the Tares.

The obvious teaching of the parable is, that under our present conditions, we are unable to form absolutely trustworthy decisions in relation to actions, or to characters. Sifting is not any present commission of ours. (This does not, of course, refer to the training of children, in which conduct and actions must be estimated.) The distinction between good and evil is vital, but the application of the rules of distinction is not intrusted to us. For the best of reasons; because we cannot know *motive*.

Keep to one point. It is a fact that, as God designs and permits, evil and good do grow together, everywhere



—we find the two even in the doings of the best men. Can we get an idea of human life which makes that fact reasonable? The idea of God in life is to test man by trial (not merely suffering). Everything in life is arranged for the purpose of trying men. Every individual has, somehow, to come into this testing. The evil man is tried quite as certainly and as severely as the good man. God arranges the trial under the most advantageous circumstances; and these He finds in leaving evil things and good things to keep together, and grow together, mutually acting and re-acting on each other. The good is better good, because it has to live with the evil. The presence of evil in the world finds spheres for good work. Moral good can only be gained through the discipline which requires the presence of moral evil. Heaven is not the place of *becoming* good, but of *being* good.

### XXX.

#### THE GADARENE DEMONiac.

“Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought Him to depart from them ; for they were taken with great fear.”—LUKE viii. 37.

*Germ Thoughts.*—This verse gives the immediate effect of a gracious miracle of recovery and healing on certain interested bystanders. Their fear was natural enough in the presence of such unusual and remarkable power, but, in this case, the fear was complicated by personal anxiety concerning the direction which the power had been taking, or rather, concerning certain results which had followed on the exercise of the power. It was in part the fear of imperilled self-interest. To their view the rescue of their neighbour from dire disease had been gained at too high a cost to them. It is but an illustrative case. It is always the same. Work on higher levels can only be done at the peril of some lower interest. And men are always willing to do without the higher, if they may keep safe the lower. The point could hardly be expressed more tersely, or more suggestively, than in the somewhat coarse north-country saying, “Give us more pigs and less parsons.”

*Scriptural References.*—Compare accounts in Matt. viii. 28 ; Mark v. 1 ; See Acts xvi. 39.

*Various Renderings.*—Ver. 26, “Gadarenes,” or Gerasenes, or

Gergesenes ; ver. 29, "had commanded," better "was commanding ; For "oftentimes" read "during, or from, a long time ;" "caught him," or mastered him, seized him, carried him away ; "He was kept bound," or, he used to be bound and kept, or, men sought to bind and keep him ; ver. 31, "the deep," or, the abyss ; ver. 33, "a steep place," or, the steep.

*Exegetical and Expository Notes.*—Vers. 26–37. *Barnes.*—Gadara was one of the ten cities that were called Decapolis. Matthew mentions two demoniacs, Luke and Mark only one. Barnes argues for a literal devil-possession. Thinks the permission to enter the swine should be no cause of surprise, seeing God permits all the evils that exists. He permits the bad to injure the good. Barnes' argument is a striking instance of special pleading (see on Matt. viii. 33 and on).

*Dr. Whedon*, on Mark v. 1–20 ; ver. 2, *Unclean spirit*.—No one is said, in the New Testament, to be possessed by Satan, or *the* devil ; but, in the original, by demons, or unclean spirits, or spirits connected with specific diseases, as a deaf, or a dumb spirit. All phenomena of the diseases exhibited by the possessed manifest themselves in abundance in that country at the present day. Dr. Thomson says, "In Sidon there are cases of epileptic fits which, in external manifestations, closely resemble those mentioned in the gospels." Yet there are cases in which the disease seems either preternaturally produced or aggravated, or attended with evidence of demoniac action in addition. Dr. Trench quotes cases where a double consciousness has shown itself. (But double consciousness is a diseased mental condition with which doctors are now quite familiar.—ED.) Whedon does not explain how a legion of devils could be said to possess one man. Or how a *Legion* could be spoken of thus, "*he* besought him." "Not to send them." (How

much simpler to admit that Luke is here repeating the common notions about devils of the common people of his day.—ED.) Ver. 13, *Gave them leave*. Did not hold any control over their course. (Our Lord's *not restraining* them is as difficult to explain as His *commanding* them.—ED.)

*Note by the Editor.*—It is worthy of careful consideration, that the word "unclean" applied to the spirit possessing the man, may give a key to the explanation of the miracle, in harmony with modern medical, mental, and moral science. There is a disease of immorality—sexual connection—which answers to *delirium tremens*, differing from it in bearing an intensely contagious character. The sexual stampede of animals is a familiar phenomena, and it may well be that this is what we have in the mad rushing of the swine. The evil that was in the man is shown up, when its influence is seen in the swine.

*Prebendary Row.*—While our Lord is always represented in the gospels as curing diseases by a power which over-rules the ordinary course of Nature; He is never once depicted as invoking the aid of a supernatural power to cure the diseases of the soul. In the natural world He supersedes, in the spiritual world He acts in conformity with law. The only apparent exception to this rule is the case of the demoniacs. As the invariable action of our Lord in the spiritual world, in conformity with law, is a most remarkable fact, it is worth while to inquire whether this is an exception. Those who resolve the phenomena of possession into mania, will at once concede that it is a physical (brain) disease. But if the authors of the gospels considered it as caused by the action of a spiritual power, then evidently it was the result of a power interfering with the

free action of the human will. If this view of demoniacal possession be correct, the demon did what our Lord always declined to do. He overwhelmed the free agency of man by the exertion of power. As such the Evangelists have rightly represented the demoniac as a proper subject of that superhuman power which resided in our Lord.

*Archbp. Trench.*—It is merely to cut short the difficulty, to say that the demoniacs were insane—epileptic, maniac, melancholic. This is partly true. There was a substratum of disease, on which the deeper evil was superinduced. Our Lord uses language which is not reconcilable with the theory which confounds these cases with disease: He speaks of them as subjects and thralls of an alien spiritual might. He addresses the evil spirit as distinct from the man. Scripture excludes the Manichæan doctrine of two co-ordinate powers of good and evil: and the Pantheistic doctrine, which denies any true reality to evil at all: says it is good at a lower stage—unripe. Scripture teaches the absolute subordination of evil to good. In these demoniacs we have neither signal sufferers merely, nor signal sinners merely. The thing striking us is the strange blending of the physical and the spiritual, the breaking up of all the harmony of the lower as well as of the higher life. (Judas' possession, quite different.) In the demoniac there was always a sense of a misery in which he does not acquiesce—the deep feeling of inward discord, of an alien power which has mastered him wholly, and now is cruelly lording it over him, and a cry in him goes forth for redemption. This cry for deliverance makes demoniacs objects and subjects for Christ's healing power. It is the real presence of another will upon the will of the sufferer, so that he is forced to speak and act as

organ of that other will. See Dante's "Inferno," 25, Image of Serpent and Man grown together. See Trench's account of *delirium tremens*, "Miracles," p. 162, note.

*Olshausen*.—Entire Scripture is pervaded with the idea that what is holy, and what is unholy in mankind, has not its root in themselves, but in a higher region of existence, whence arise those influences of good and evil which may be received or rejected on the part of men according to the standing and faithfulness of the individual. By removing the source of evil out of human nature, redemption is recognised as possible. For it is only the germ of good in man, viewed in its state of bondage under a hostile power, that *can* be redeemed. But the hostile power, as well as the man himself—if he consciously resign himself to it,—is not an object of redeeming power. The word, demonised, is always with appearances of sickness or derangement, or loss of personal consciousness. Yet the sickness is not the characteristic of the demoniacs, as the same maladies are represented in some cases as demoniacal, and in others as not. Many demoniacs were maniacs, but it does not appear that madmen were considered by Jews as necessarily demoniacs. 1. Condition of demoniac always supposes a certain degree of moral delinquency: sin showing itself as predominant sensuality. 2. Appears as a characteristic weakening of the bodily organisation, particularly the nervous system, occasioned by indulged sin. Persons resigning themselves to sin of a more refined than sensual kind would be wicked, not devil-possessed. In madness, there is always a violent conflict between the better self and the powers of darkness. Olshausen compares the power of speaking with tongues in the might of the *πνεῦμα*, with



these opposite manifestations. We should not conceive of the inward state of a demoniac as if two or more persons were contained in the individual; the suffering person appears with his own human consciousness suppressed and a foreign life vigorous in action, with alternating lucid intervals. In them is often an enhanced faculty of foreseeing—a kind of somnambulic clairvoyance. By this the Saviour was recognised. Olshausen thinks that the man came at once to Christ, and on Christ's commanding the unclean spirit out, a violent paroxysm seized him. (This may have begun the excitement in the swine, which are usually regarded as types of sexual sensuality.)

*Dean Plumptre.*—The belief of later Judaism ascribed to "Demons" many of the more startling forms of bodily and mental suffering which the language of modern thought groups under the general head of "disease." The Talmud swarms with allusions to such demons as lurking in the air, in food, in clothing, and working their evil will on the bodies or the souls of men. The belief bore its natural fruit among the Jews of our Lord's time. The work of the exorcist became a profession.

*Dr. Thomson* ("Land and Book").—The instance mentioned in Luke viii. 26–36, is most remarkable; but there are some very similar at the present day—furious and dangerous maniacs, who wander about the mountains, and sleep in tombs and caves. In their worst paroxysms they are quite unmanageable, and prodigiously strong. It is one of the most common traits in this madness, that the victims refuse to wear clothes. I have often seen them absolutely naked in the crowded streets of Beirûth and Sidon. It would certainly be rash to decide that this calamity was the work of evil

spirits, but the manifestations are inhuman and satanic, and the real causes mysterious.

*J. F. Vallings, M.A.*—The psychology of demonism is obscure. Modern lunacy furnishes points of contact, and apparent instances of it now and then. (Cases of lunacy are sometimes partly, at least, spiritually conditioned.) But the two are not to be confounded, as the ordinary lunatics may merely suffer from some cerebral disease, while the demonised need have had none, and was conscious of possession by some foul spirit, sometimes losing his consciousness in that of his master-fiend, sometimes violently asserting his own separate individuality. Again, the moral connection between demonism and evil was absolute, between lunacy and evil it is partial and relative and occasional.

*Dean Farrar.*—The Jews, like most ancient nations, attributed every evil result immediately to the action of demons—*e.g.*, even Noah's drunkenness. All mental aberration, all sudden sickness, all melancholy tendencies, all unexpected obstacles were, and in the East, still are, regarded as due to the direct influence of demons (*devs*). That the Jews regarded as demoniacal possession what we regard as epilepsy and mania is certain.

Knowing to how singular an extent the mental impressions of man affect by some unknown electric influence the lower animals—knowing for instance, that man's cowardice and exultation, and even his superstitious terrors, *do* communicate themselves to the dog which accompanies him, or the horse on which he rides,—there can be no difficulty in understanding that the shrieks and gesticulations of a powerful lunatic might strike uncontrollable terror into a herd of swine. It is true that the Evangelists held, in all its simplicity,

the belief that actual devils passed in multitudes out of the man and into the swine. But is it not allowable here to make a distinction between actual facts, and that which was the mere conjecture and inference of the spectators from whom the three Evangelists heard the tale?

"They were afraid,"—more afraid of that Holy presence than of the previous furies of the possessed. The man was saved; but their precious swine were in danger.

*Dr. Edersheim.*—It is of the deepest importance always to keep in mind, that the "demonised" was not a *permanent* state or possession by the powers of darkness. For this establishes a *moral* element. The demonised state involved personal responsibility, although that of a diseased and disturbed consciousness.

*Sermons in Library.*—On Matthew viii. 28–34; C. Girdlestone's Sermons, Course i. p. 157; Bishop Hall's "Contemplations"; J. Saurin's "Disc. Hist.," &c., Vol. ix. p. 475; Bishop Wilberforce's "Sermons before Queen," p. 107.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—What may be regarded as at once the simple and satisfactory explanation of this miracle, and the attendant incident, the destruction of the swine, is very difficult to present to an ordinary congregation. If it can be wisely treated, the perplexing difficulties, which create so much questioning and doubt, will be very materially relieved. Many, if not all, the cases of so-called "devil-possession," were cases of bodily passion, indulged until, gaining strength, the passion subdues the will, and utterly degrades the man by its ruling. Illustration can be taken from the passion of drink, but the view may be applied to all other kinds of bodily indulgence

and passion. This always has to be taken account of as a possibility—any passion may come to master the man, and make him a dual being—sometimes himself, and sometimes personified passion. An incident which occurred some years ago at Aldershot is very suggestive in relation to the wild, mad rushing of the swine. Under a terrible impulse of sexual excitement, the cavalry horses broke loose, stamped about the camp, then dashed off into the country, leaping and tearing until many were killed, and others seriously injured. Had those horses been on a slope leading down to the sea, they would have gone into the water just as the swine did. The point from which the explanation of this incident may start is, that this poor man was suffering from a mania of sensuality, similar to *delirium tremens* as a mania of drink (see Mark v. 1-8). The man had an *unclean* spirit. He went about naked. Luke says, "For a long time he had worn no clothes." He was rude in his ways; positively dangerous to females, and unpleasant to everybody. Recognising this as his peculiarity, our Lord said, "Come forth, thou unclean spirit, out of the man." The swine were the animal symbol of the evil passion from which the man suffered, and whereby he was enslaved.

Then a part of our Lord's work of teaching, for this man, for His disciples, and for the people around, might very properly include an impressive exhibition of the abominableness of this spirit and passion. They saw it in the suffering man; it was well that they should see it in the beasts. The suffering man would be helped to realise the greatness of his deliverance, as he saw the terrible havoc which the passion that had mastered him made when it mastered the beasts. We have given us in this recorded story, our most terrible warning against

the danger of giving way to sensual passions, and a teaching from our Lord, which the great Apostle puts into formal language thus—"That every one of you should know how to possess the vessel of his body in sanctification and honour." "Ye are not called unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." The actual destruction of the swine was no design of our Lord's. It was what we may call the accident of the occasion—the result of the stampede occurring on a steep hill-side overhanging the lake.

This subject is not often treated in Christian pulpits, but it is one sorely needing attention, and wise, strong, careful teaching.

## XXXI.

### THE MAN OF SORROWS.

“He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.”—ISAIAH liii. 3.

*Germ Thoughts.*—Apprehend aright the *spiritual* nature of the mission which the Messiah undertook, and it will be seen that it necessarily involved strain and self-sacrifice for Himself, and the misapprehension, and consequent antagonism, of men. But His share of human suffering was no accident attending on His mission. It was part of His mission. That sharing of human sorrow and grief alone could give Him the persuasive power on human hearts which would enable Him to win men's love for Himself. That personal love for Himself alone would give Christ entrance into hearts and lives, that He might do His saving and sanctifying work. This will at once be seen if we try to answer this question—What would Christ have been to sinning and suffering humanity, if He had *not* been a “man of sorrows and acquainted with grief”? It may be answered in this way—He could then only have been an *outside* helper, a reliever from distressful circumstances. He could not have entered the innermost chambers of our being, and saved us by winning our trust and our love, and dethroning the long-worshipped idol of self. It is impossible to conceive our souls going



out in passionate, absorbing love to any but the "man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," whose sorrows and grief were *like our own*, and were borne *for us*.

As concerning Jesus Christ, the text asserts a fact. A strange fact, which illustrates this truth—men have only a general and vague, not in any degree a definite, sense of their need—moral need; and so we cannot be surprised that they should fail to recognise what is the supply of their real, not their merely apparent, need. In whatever way the Divine seeks to help the human, now that the human has become *unnatural* through self-willedness, the human will be sure to resist, and will try to reject. Human depravity is revealed in this one historical fact—Perfect virtue (we may meet objectors by saying, the nearest approach ever made to perfect virtue) was once embodied, and men made that life a life of sorrows, and cut it short with a violent death.

*Scripture References.*—Psalm xxii. 6; Isaiah xlix. 7; Heb. iv. 15; see John i. 10, 11.

*Various Renderings.*—For "is despised," read "was despised." For "sorrows," read "pains." For "grief," read "sickness." Revised Version, "He was despised and rejected (forsaken, marg.) of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (sickness, marg.).

*Exegetical and Expository Notes.*—Geo. Adam Smith, M.A.—The passage properly begins with chapter lii. 13. Smith translates text thus:—"Despised and rejected of men, man of pains, and familiar with ailing." The suffering, which in chapter 1. seemed to be the Servant's misfortune, is here seen as His wisdom which shall issue in His glory. But of themselves men do not see this, and they need to be convinced. Pain, the blessed means of God, is man's abhorrence and perplexity. All along the history of the world, the Sufferer

has been the astonishment and stumbling-block of humanity. The barbarian gets rid of Him ; he is the first difficulty with which every young literature wrestles ; to the end He remains the problem of philosophy, and the sore test of faith. It is not native to men to see meaning and profit in the Sufferer ; they are staggered by Him ; they see no reason, or promise, in Him. So did men receive this unique Sufferer, this Servant of Jehovah. But His life is to teach them the opposite of their impressions, and to bring them out of their perplexity into reverence before the revealed purpose of God in the Sufferer. . . . In contrast to human experience, God reveals in His Servant that suffering is fruitful ; that sacrifice is practical. Pain, in God's service, shall lead to glory. . . . No one is ever permitted to rest with a physical, or intellectual, impression of suffering. The race, the individual, has always been forced by conscience to the task of finding a moral reason for pain ; and nothing so marks man's progress as the successive solutions he has attempted to this problem.

*E. Henderson, Ph.D.—Grief—i.e., weakness, affliction, sickness, is used of both corporeal and mental disease ; and of what is inflicted by another, as well as of what arises from natural causes in the subject. In the present connection, all ideas of natural malady or infirmity would be most irrelevant. The prophet uses the word figuratively, to denote the severe bodily and mental sufferings to which our Lord was subjected.*

*T. K. Cheyne, M.A.—Rejected, deserted of men. Lit., "One from whom men held themselves aloof" (see Job xix. 14). Man of Sorrows, pains. Or, a "man of reproofs" (see Prov. xxix. 1). Sickness does include*

sorrow ; but it means something more—viz., the punishment of sin.

*J.A. Alexander, D.D.*—The phrase, “Man of Sorrows,” seems to mean one whose afflictions are his chief characteristic ; perhaps, with an allusion to their number in the plural form. The reader is invited to compare the forced application of this verse to the Prophets, to all Israel, to the pious Jews, or to the younger race of exiles, with the old interpretation of it as a prophecy of Christ’s humiliation.

*Dean Plumptre.*—The words “sorrow,” “grief,” in the Hebrew, imply the thought of bodily pain or disease. It is contended that our Lord’s body was not subject to disease, but this was an essential condition of His fellowship with humanity. If we do not read of any actual disease in the Gospel, we, at least, have evidence of an organisation, every nerve of which thrilled with its sensitiveness to pain, and was quickly exhausted. The intensity of His sympathy made Him feel the pain of others as His own. His was a nature subject to the conditions of our humanity.

*Dr. Cunningham Geikie* on “The Servant of the Lord.” Israel, as a whole, is, in a lower sense, the Servant of Jehovah ; but this dignity the Prophet ascribes to *One* who is the flower and glory of the people of God ; His “Servant” in the sublimest fulness of the term, through Whom His gracious designs, carried so far toward their fulfilment by Israel as a nation, are to be triumphantly completed.

“*Hour before Holy Communion*,” p. 9.—The gem of Isaiah’s prophecy is the fifty-third chapter. Sung to the prophetic harp in low, and tender, and sympathetic tones, every note breathing out a wail of woe, this sorrow-song has more power upon us than all the high-swelling

songs of victory—all the conquer-songs that are sung to the same prophetic harp. In them we may exult ; here we linger, drawn near, absorbed, subdued. Many a tear has fallen upon the page that tells of Messiah's woes. The pathway of shame which the humbled Saviour trod comes fully into view. We watch the dark clouds gathering over Him. We hear men reviling the apparently helpless Sufferer. We listen to the stricken heart which, for a moment, even fears the Divine forsaking. We catch the dying cry, and hear the last heart-breaking sigh. And, looking through our sympathising tears, we read the words which explain it all—"He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities."

*Sermons in Library.*—John Flavel's "Four Weighty Ends of Christ's Humiliation," Works, Vol. i. p. 467. John Newton's "Messiah, Despised and Rejected of Men," Works, Vol. iv. p. 198. W. Barrow, "The Sufferings of Christ," SS., Vol. i. p. 33.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—Commentators lose themselves in discussing the *usual* meanings of the terms translated "sorrows," "grief." They miss seeing an instance of the Hebrew reduplication of sentences. Sorrows and grief are two expressions for the one thing, which is in the writer's mind. His point is—that Messiah's life was, necessarily, a *severe strain-time*. Being what He was, and where He was, and coming to do what He had to do, Messiah could not fail to be a "Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." It is important to avoid exaggeration in dealing with Christ's as a life of suffering. His was the suffering that comes through *strain*, not through infirmity, disease, or calamity. There were sides of holy joy and pleasure in our Lord's life. The following line of thought may be

unfolded.—1. To what extent is the text true? Only partially, if we think of the sorrows of calamity; but fully, if we think of the sorrows of strain—of nervous sensibility. 2. What were the causes, or occasions, of this strain? (1.) They partly came out of extreme sensitiveness to evil, and the things attendant on, and revealing evil. The doctor and nurse, who heal and tend, have the keenest appreciation of the patient's sufferings. (2.) Partly out of the enmity of men, who could not understand this Messiah, or get from Him what they thought they wanted most. (3.) Partly out of the mission with which He was intrusted by God, in carrying out which He must *seem* to fail. 3. What was the reward of this suffering strain-time? (1.) The assurance of His absolute kinship with us, which makes our trust in Him so real. (2.) The exaltation of the Divine Father, who recognised the submissive obedience of His suffering Sonship.

## XXXII.

### POWER IN THE CRUCIFIED.

“ But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God.”—1 COR. i. 24.

*Germ Thoughts.*—In verse 23 is the distinct affirmation, “ We preach Christ crucified.” It is not easy for us fittingly to apprehend the public sentiment of our Lord’s time concerning death by crucifixion. This made the preaching of Christ to Jew and Gentile extremely difficult. Jews felt dishonoured by the notion that One who was crucified could be their Messiah. Gentiles scorned the idea that a crucified criminal could be a Saviour. Early Gospel preaching must have dealt almost entirely with the facts of Christ’s life, and with the Apostolic memories of His teachings. We can quite understand that the first preachers must have been tempted to reserve things which they felt would give offence to their hearers. But they were placed in this difficulty—the Holy Spirit sent them forth as witnesses of the Lord’s *resurrection*. Now, resurrection follows on death. So they were bound to tell of His death, and to be honest in what they told. What surprises us is that they came even to glory in the crucifixion. Driven to dwell on it so fully, they came, for themselves, to enter into the mystery and meaning of it. It is important, however, to see clearly, that it is *Christ* who was cruci-



fied, and not the *crucifixion of Christ*, that is the power of God. The allusion to His having been crucified, may only be intended to secure His identification—this Jesus who was crucified, and no other. Christ is the power of God, put forth for the moral redemption of humanity.

*Scripture References.*—On verses 22–24; John iv. 48, “Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe;” Isaiah viii. 14, “But for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence, to both the houses of Israel” (see Rom. ix. 32); 1 Cor. i. 18, “The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness;” Rom. i. 4, “Declared to be the Son of God with power.” Rom. i. 16, “It is the power of God unto salvation;” Col. ii. 3, “Of Christ, in Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

*Scriptures giving the Apostolic teaching respecting the Cross.*

—Gal. v. 2.—This passage is connected with the rite of circumcision. To submit to this rite would be to remove the offence of the crucified. Better bear the shame of believing the crucified, than the shame of circumcision. Gal. vi. 12, 14. —This is also related to circumcision. St. Paul seems to look upon his interest in the Cross of Christ as a kind of spiritual circumcision—contrasting a legal and typical separation, cutting off, surrender, with the true spiritual surrender, giving up, involved in accepting a Christ who was crucified.

Ephesians ii. 16.—Enmity of Jew and Gentile removed when both believe in the Crucified. The Cross a power unto reconciliation of national enmities. Phil. ii. 8.—The death of the Cross viewed as the highest act, the climax of obedience. Col. i. 20.—Cross in connection with reconciliation—peace-making. The Cross as place where the sacrifice was made. Col. ii. 14. Similar idea. But the need of reconciliation is viewed as concerning *man*, rather than God. Heb. xii. 2.—

Cross is viewed as the climax of Christ's life-conflict. Christ is model and leader. 1 Cor. ii. 8.—Christ's power in the Gospel is not mere human power. It is unique spiritual power. 2 Cor. xiii. 4.—Reference to Cross to illustrate the double condition of Christ—weak in self, strong in God. Gal. iii. 1.—Vindication of the clearness and fulness with which Christ had been revealed to the Galatians by apostolic preaching. It had been so fully that it was as if Jesus had been actually crucified in their sight.

Observe that there had been no reserve whatever in proclaiming honestly the full historical truth about Christ, though it might be stumbling-block to Jew, and foolishness to Greek, Make what we may of the records of Christ, it is satisfactory to know that we have them complete, honour and shame are all told.

*Revised Version of verses 22–24.*—"Seeing that Jews ask for signs, and Greeks (Gentiles) seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ (marg., a Messiah) crucified, unto Jews a stumbling-block, and unto Gentiles foolishness; but unto them that are called (marg., the called themselves), both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

*Exegetical and Expository Notes.*—*Webster and Wilkinson.*—More particular statement of the case between Christianity and the systems of the world. Jews, Greeks, as such regarded characteristically. *Sign.*—Note how the Jews sought a sign from Jesus in the days of his flesh (Matt. xii. 38; xvi. 1). Christ's mission did not lack miraculous signs, but they were not of the kind that the Jews looked for. What they looked for would have been inconsistent both with their own present condition, and with the nature of the Gospel dispensation. *Wisdom.*—This they seek in the Gospel; they look for something in it resembling their own theories and speculations. *Christ crucified.*—Perfect tense of the verb is used, representing Christ in the abiding character of the Crucified

One. Faith in a crucified Messiah was the *skandalon* (stumbling-block) of the Jews. The Greeks would not object to a teacher of religion because of his dying a violent death. (See case of Socrates.) They would count it foolishness to represent that death itself as the foundation of Christianity, or as otherwise efficacious than as an example.

Ver. 24.—The Apostle means that Christ, preached as “crucified,” becomes the power of God, and the wisdom of God to the called. *Power* here answered to the *sign* and *stumbling-block* of the Jew. *Wisdom* answers to the foolishness of the Greek. The wisdom and power are obviously considered in their effects upon individuals in conversion and salvation.

*Teignmouth Shore, M.A.*—This is a further unfolding of the fact of the simplicity of the preaching of the Cross. It pandered neither to Jewish-minded persons (not in the Greek *the Jews, the Gentiles*, but simply “Jews,” “Gentiles”), who desired visible portents to support the teaching, nor to those of Greek taste who desired an actual and clear philosophic proof of it. The Gospel of Christ crucified made its way by those very qualities which they regarded as “weakness and folly,” vindicating itself as the “power of God,” more mighty than any “sign” a Jew might ask for; and the “wisdom of God,” surpassing any merely intellectual “wisdom” which a Greek might desire. . . . St. Paul always speaks of all Christians as “the called,” not using that word in the narrower sense to which some modern religious sects have restricted it.

*Professor Lias.*—The Jews required external attestations of the power of Christ, and especially that of the subjugation of the world to His kingly authority. The Greeks sought dialectic skill from one who aspired to be

their teacher. The Christian doctrine was the very reverse of what Jews and Greeks demanded. Instead of Messiah upon an earthly throne, triumphant over His enemies ; instead of a skilful and original disputant, the Christian preachers spoke of a condemned criminal. As a temporal prince He had no pretensions to notice. To the title of philosopher, at least in the Corinthian sense of the term, He had no claim. His one argument was His life and death. What wonder if this doctrine were to the Jews an offence, and sheer nonsense in the ears of the inquisitive and argumentative Greeks ?

Ver. 24.—His power enabled them to shake off the yoke of sin, and conform their lives to the pattern of His. His wisdom consisted in speaking of what He knew, and testifying what He had seen (John iii. 11), in declaring those heavenly truths hitherto concealed.

*Dean Farrar* gives the points of the passage very skilfully:—"Christ had sent him (Paul) not to baptise, but to preach ; and that not in wisdom of utterance, that Christ's Cross might not be rendered void. The mention of preaching brings him to the aberrations of the Apollonian party (a section following the eloquent preacher, Apollos). They had attached immense importance to eloquence, logic, something which they called wisdom, and exalted as such. He shows them that they were on a wholly mistaken track. Such human wisdom, such ear-flattering eloquence, such superficial and plausible enticements, he had deliberately rejected. Of human wisdom he thought little. It lay under the law of revelation. It had not led the world to the knowledge of God. It had not saved the world from the crucifixion of Christ. And, therefore, he had not preached to them about the Logos, or about Æons, or in Philonian allegories or with philosophical refinements. He had offered

neither a sign to the Jews, nor wisdom to the Greeks. What he had to preach was regarded by the world as abject foolishness—it was the Cross—it was the doctrine of a crucified Messiah, which was to the Jews revolting ; of a crucified Saviour, which was to the Jews ridiculous ; but it pleased God to save believers by the foolishness (in the world's view) of the thing preached, and it was to those who were in the way of salvation the wisdom and the power of God. They were not the wise, and the mighty, and the noble of the world ; but, as a rule, the foolish, and the weak, and the despised. It was not with the world's power, but with its impotences ; not with its strength, but with its feebleness ; not with its knowledge, but with its ignorance ; not with its rank, but with its ignobleness ; not with kings and philosophers, but with slaves and women, that its Divine forces were allied ; and with them God did so purpose to reveal His power that no glory could accrue to man save from the utter abasement of human glory. That was why Paul had come to them, not with rhetoric, but with the simple doctrine of Christ crucified : not with oratoric dignity, but in weakness, fear, and trembling ; not with winning elocution, but with spiritual demonstration and spiritual power—so that man might be utterly lost in God, and they might feel the origin of their faith to be not human, but Divine.

*Otto Zöckler, D.D.*, says :—"No Apostle speaks otherwise of the crucified Saviour, than as penetrated with the sense of His mighty and loving presence, as the Lord of Glory, with the Heavenly Father in the Holy Spirit reigning, and returning to judgment upon the whole world. To be "witnesses of the resurrection," they all alike regard as the special task of their lives, the purport of their whole apostolic ministry. . . . On this very account Paul is so far from being ashamed of the Gospel



of Christ in presence of the wise of this world, that for this very reason he makes his boast so confidently and so fearlessly of his message, which is to the Jews an offence, and to the Greeks a folly. He has made the thousandfold experience that the arms stretched forth upon the Cross, are stretched forth in the same love alike to circumcision and uncircumcision, to Jew and Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, Bond, and Free ; and that the power of compassion in the faithful Saviour's heart is able also to melt the obdurate resistance of unbelieving human hearts. It is more than an idealising of certain Old Testament religious ideas, more than a mysticism of subjective pious emotions of the heart, which is developed on the ground of this vitally experienced communion of salvation with the crucified and risen One. He "became the creator of a philosophy of history which has its centre in the Cross of Christ," and the fundamental thoughts of this philosophy of history include the eternally unutterable norms of *all* true philosophy of history in general, the cognition of that "wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory," and compared with which all the wisdom of this world, and of the princes of this world, is nothing but folly."

*Sermons in Library.*—On ver. 21. Sherlock's Works, Vol. i. p. 93. On ver. 24. Bushnell, "New Life," p. 239. On vers. 22-24. Bourdaloue, "The Passion of our Saviour," Vol. i. p. 33. Isaac Barrow, Works, Vol. v. pp. 335, 344.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—A simple and natural division would be—1. What sort of salvation men expect. "Jews require a sign." "Greeks seek wisdom." 2. What sort of salvation God provides. "We preach Christ crucified." 3. What God's salvation



becomes to mere men. "To Jews, stumbling-block." "To Greeks foolishness." 4. What God's salvation becomes to those who are called. "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."

The subject may, however, be treated in a closer, and more modern way, in harmony with those apprehensions of the meaning and mystery of the cross, which are the unfolding of Divine revelation to the men of our time. Our first inquiry in dealing with any passage of the New Testament is—what did the writer intend his readers to understand by what he wrote? And to get at this, we must fully enter into the atmosphere of thought which those readers were breathing at the time. This is not always an easy thing to do, but it always repays toil. There was one thing in the condition of the Corinthian Church at this time which Paul had in his mind when he wrote the words of the text. It had become a subtle cause of mischief, so subtle indeed that we do not at once see in what the mischief lay. The eloquent Apollos had been the teacher of the Corinthians. We suspect he was but imperfectly acquainted with Christianity, and not a very safe or sound preacher. Any way, excited by his eloquence, the Corinthians were carried away from the simplicity of the Gospel. Paul had two evils to deal with. The usual resistance of the Jew to the bare idea of a crucified Messiah; and the interest of the Gentiles in the rhetorical elaborations of Apollos; which meant philosophising about Christ, not affirming simply and vigorously the actual historical fact of his death. What we now know as the "doctrine of the cross" is the creation of the Christian ages, and could not have been known to the Corinthians. We need to see, very clearly, that St. Paul, and the other apostles, were

"witnesses unto the resurrection," and that the Gospel which they preached was this—"Jesus is alive; He is spiritually present now. You may have direct personal dealings with him in regard to your soul-salvation now?" They persisted in preaching His death, as a historical fact, as a public, violent, well-attested death, because if there had been no death, there could have been no resurrection. To preach "Christ crucified" is to preach Christ unquestionably dead to the material world, and so clear the way for preaching Christ risen in the spiritual world to be for ever kin, as a spiritual Saviour, with man's supreme need as a spiritual being.

## XXXIII.

### THE JUDGMENT-SEAT.

“For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.”

—2 COR. v. 10.

*Germ Thoughts.*—The coming of Christ into the world has brought a new basis of judgment, a new test of the individual soul. The mood of every man towards God is revealed by the treatment which the man gives to God's Son, whom He hath sent. This testing is in actual present operation. It is an eternal now. The results of the testing can only be disclosed when each man's life is complete. Then is the day of Christ; then each man must know the final result of the testing to which He has been subjected, by having Christ preached to him. Figures, from Assize Courts, and from Egyptian Weighings, must be treated as figures and illustrations. What we must try and find is the underlying spiritual reality which the figures help us to apprehend. It is important that we should recognise the distinction between the omniscient searching into the motives of human conduct, so as perfectly to appraise the value of character and conduct, and the putting of the claims, and example of the Lord Jesus Christ against every life so as to test its relations with God. If a man is indifferent to God, it will be clearly seen by the way in which he regards Jesus Christ. If a

man has a great soul-cry for God, which he cannot and would not stifle, he will gladly, thankfully, and heartily accept His Son, whom He has sent to us, that He might give Himself to us in Him. Observe that St. Paul does not say, "We must all appear *at one time*, before the judgment seat of Christ." And yet this is what his words have been made to mean. Every man must, but every man is taken in his order.

*Scripture References.*—For judgment-seat see Matt. xxv. 31, 32; Rom. xiv. 10. For terms of judgment, see Rom. ii. 6; Gal. vi. 7; Eph. vi. 8; Col. iii. 24, 25; Rev. xxii. 12. God's continuous judgment, Eccles. xi. 9; xii. 14. Commission of judgment to Christ, John v. 22; ix. 39. The word appraisement would be more suitable than judgment. In the Scriptural use of the term "judgment," the idea of "appraisement" alternates with the idea of "condemnation," and the careful student will endeavour to detect the precise bearing of the word "judgment" in view of its context.

*Revised Version.*—"For we must all be made manifest." The same word is used as is translated "made manifest" in ver. 11. Whatever cloaks and veils may hide us now, or deceive our fellows, the truth about us will be revealed when the *Christ-test* is applied to us. See 1 Cor. iv. 5.

*Exegetical and Expository Notes.*—Dean Plumptre.—The term "made manifest" is specially characteristic of this epistle, in which it occurs nine times. *The judgment-seat of Christ.* The Greek word shows the influence of Roman associations. In the Gospels the imagery of the last judgment is that of a King sitting on his *throne* (Matt. xxv. 31), and the word is the ever-recurring note of the Apocalypse, in which it occurs forty-nine times. Here the judgment-seat, or *bema*, is the tribunal of the

Roman magistrate, raised high above the level of the *basilica*, or hall, at the end of which it stood. *Things done in his body*. It would have seemed almost impossible, but for the perverse ingenuity of the system-builders of theology, to evade the force of this unqualified assertion of the working of the universal law of retribution. No formula of justification by faith, or imputed righteousness, or pardon sealed in the blood of Christ, or priestly absolution, is permitted by St. Paul to mingle with his expectations of that great day, as revealing the secrets of men's hearts, awarding to each man according to his works.

*Prof. Lias*.—" *Things done in his body*." Lit., "through the body." This is the reason why Christians are to strive during the present life to be pleasing to God (ver. 9). Their wages in the next world shall be according to their acts in this. The "terror" of the Lord is the fear which man has of His to-be-dreaded judgment.

*Dean Farrar* renders the verse thus :—"To please Him is our sole ambition, because we shall each stand before His tribunal to receive the things done in the body ; to be paid in kind for our good and evil, not by arbitrary infliction, but by natural result. This is our awful belief, and we strive to make it yours." Farrar's note on this is as follows :—It is not easy to see the exact correlation between the judicial process of result according to good and evil conduct—even as regards saints—and that free absolute justification by faith in Christ, that complete forgiveness of sins, and tearing up of the bond which is against us, on which St. Paul dwells in 2 Cor. v. 19, 21 ; Rom. iii. 25 ; Col. ii. 14. But faith is as little troubled by unsolved antinomies in the kingdom of grace as in that of Nature.

*Webster and Wilkinson.*—"Be manifested"—i.e., have our true character and conduct laid open. May receive the fruits of his life in the body, looking to what he did, whether good or evil. Actions involve in their very character reward or punishment. Every action has an enduring result to the agent. Not, the things done by means of the body, but the things done in the body, in the bodily state.

*Illustration from the Egyptian "Book of the Dead."*—There remained the great and final judgment, which took place before Osiris and the forty-two judges of the dead in the Hall of the Two Truths. In the picture of the scene (see "The Dwellers on the Nile," R.T.S., page 174), Osiris is sitting on a throne, and holding the whip and sceptre indicative of royalty and dominion. In front of him is an inscription which reads: "Osiris, the Good Being, Lord of Life, the great God and Ruler within Rustat and Akart, Khent Amenti, the great God, lord of Abydos, the King everlasting." The forty-two judges are the judges of the dead, each of whom bore a name descriptive of his part. Before the hall of Osiris is a table laden with offerings, and above it are the four genii of the dead, Amset, Hapi, Tuanmutef, and Kebhsenuf. Near the table is the destroyer of enemies, a composite monster, and behind him stands Thoth, writing the decision on a palette; while his cynocephalus companion is seated on the middle of the balance. The heart of the deceased is being weighed in the right hand pan of the scale, against righteousness in the other. Horus has his arm stretched out to the indicator of the balance, and Anubis is watching the pan of the scale in which the figure of Mât, righteousness, is seated. On the other side of the heart stand two figures of the goddess of right or law, holding a sceptre, and between them is the deceased. The deceased then makes what is called a "negative" confession, that is a confession in which he declares to each god that he has not committed a particular



sin or crime. If the deceased succeeds in passing this ordeal satisfactorily, he comes forth at once as a god (there is no place of probation), he becomes identified with Osiris, in whose shape his mummy was made, and he roams through the fields of bliss at pleasure.—(*E. A. Wallis Budge, M.A.*)

*The Buddhistic Notion of "Karma."*—Buddha taught that sin, sorrow, and deliverance, the state of man in this life, in all previous and in all future lives, are the inevitable results of his own acts. He thus applies the inexorable law of cause and effect to the soul. What a man sows he must reap. As no evil remains without punishment, and no good deed without reward, it follows that neither priest nor God can prevent each act bearing its own consequences. A system in which our whole well-being, past, present, and to come, depends on ourselves, theoretically, leaves little room for the interference, or even existence, of a personal God.—(*H. Dharmapala.*)

*Karma* is that self-originating, self-operating, inflexible law which necessitates and causes the working out of the cumulative influences of merit and demerit; these separately producing in succeeding births their full and appropriate effects, extending through cycles of ages, the *Karma* being modified from time to time by the passage through these different births. Thus *Karma* is not in any sense a Divine providence. It is a blind impersonal force that attends our destiny through all the course of our many existences, and makes us reap in other births what we sow in this.

(*Note.*—This doctrine of *Karma* is interesting in connection with our subject, as showing how the human mind has dealt with the fact that sin has its punishments now, which must be the execution of judgments already pronounced. We have to find our way to the apprehension of two truths—a judgment on sin running on now, and a judgment on sin revealed when human life is completed.)

*Sermons in Library.*—Bishop E. Hopkins' Works, Vol. iv. p. 125. Bishop Jeremy Taylor, Three Sermons, Works, Vol. v.

p. 1. Archbishop Tillotson's Sermons, Vol. ix. pp. 386-444.  
Jeremy Collier, Two Sermons, Discourses, p. 1.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—Every thoughtful person will be willing to admit that the common and popular notions of a coming judgment-day are eminently unsatisfactory. They do but reproduce, in the large, the ordinary scenes of earthly assize courts, and make no attempt to apprehend those spiritual realities which are set before us in material figures. Reverently therefore we may inquire what is that spiritual judgment of spiritual being which the spiritual Being Christ presides over. What the text really asserts is not, that we must all, as bodies, stand in front of a material judgment-seat; but that what we *are* must inevitably be revealed, or made manifest, when Christ tests us, or when the Christ-test is applied to us. At any time, if a man is shown up to himself, or shown up to his fellows, it may be said he appears "before the judgment-seat of Christ." It was said of Christ that by His coming many hearts should be revealed. What Christ is to humanity may be illustrated by the testings of the chemical analyst. Some mixed liquid is submitted to him. A true estimate of it no one has been able to give. The chemist knows what will infallibly reveal it. He adds liquid to it which at once separates the constituents and declares their character. So Christ put into the midst of humanity separates man from man, and brings into view the character and quality of each. The verse before the text shows that what is in the apostle's mind is a present recognition of efforts to please God. Show how Christ tests now, and continuously through life up to its close: —1. Man's relations with God. 2. Man's estimate of himself. 3. Man's purposes in life. 4. Man's moral

character. 5. Man's response to the claims of his fellow-man. Point out that the punishment issues of all conduct, begin here in this life, continue here in this life, and unfold further when this life is complete. We are always at the "judgment-seat of Christ."

## XXXIV.

### SECRET FAULTS.

“Cleanse Thou me from secret faults.”—PSALM xix. 12.

*Germ Thoughts.*—The conviction of sins—that is, of acts done wilfully in opposition to known and authoritative rule and law—is a matter of conscience. The Holy Spirit quickens and enlightens the conscience so that it readily recognises, and witnesses to, the things that have been wilfully done. But the range of a man's dissatisfaction with himself is by no means limited to the sphere of *things done*. When the light of God's Spirit is thrown upon a man, he comes to see much more than he could have suspected. When the convicting Spirit comes in power to a man, He does not stop with asking, “What have you *done*?” He persists in pressing the far more searching question, “What *are you*?” A man knows but little while he only knows his actions. He is surprised indeed, and he may well be humbled in the dust, when he comes to know himself. This may be effectively illustrated in the case of David, if he be regarded as the writer of Psalms xix., xxxii., and li. In Psalm xxxii. we find his mind is mainly occupied with his “transgressions.” In Psalm li. his mind is mainly occupied with his bad, unclean spirit. In Psalm xix. we have him meditating on the personal searching power which the law of God has. In its light he discovers “errors,”

"secret faults," "sins of presumption;" things hitherto disregarded. Apply to your conduct God's revealed law, and it will reveal your deeds of commission, your sins, and your acts of omission, which are negative sins. But apply to yourselves the light of God's holiness, put Himself, spiritually apprehended, in close contact with yourselves, and the result is wholly alarming; for there come into view your "errors"—waywardness; "secret faults"—indulgences that you kept from men, and thought you had kept from God; "presumptuous sins"—which you did not see before were insults offered to the most High.

*Scripture References.*—Psalm xl. 12; li. 9-11; xc. 8, "secret sins;" Gen. xx. 5, 6; Lev. iv. 2; 1 Sam. xxv. 32, 33; Psalm cxix. 133; Rom. vi. 12.

*Various Renderings.*—Ver. 12, read "As for errors, who can mark them?" Ver. 13, for "presumptuous sins," read "presumptuous men." Omit the words "the great transgression."

*Exegetical and Expository Notes.*—*Delitzsch.*—The poet begins this psalm with the praise of the glory of God the Creator, and rises from this to the mercy of God the Lawgiver, and thus, through the praise springing from wondering and loving adoration, he clears the way to the prayer for justification and sanctification. The last strophe presents us with a sharply sketched soteriology, *in nuce*. If we add Psalm xxxii., then we have the whole of the way of salvation in almost Pauline clearness and definiteness. Inasmuch as the law is not only a copy of the Divine will but also a mirror of self-knowledge, in which a man may behold, and come to know, himself, he prays for forgiveness, in respect of the many sins of infirmity—though for the most part unperceived by him—to which even the pardoned one succumbs. "Peccatum involuntarium" includes both

“peccatum ignorantiae” and “peccatum infirmitis.” There is an Arab proverb reading thus, “No sin which is persisted in is small ; no sin is great for which forgiveness is asked of God.” From all those sins which even he who is most earnestly striving after sanctification does not discern, although he may desire to know them, by reason of the ever-limited nature of his knowledge both of himself and of sin.

*Dean Perowne.*—With all the Psalmist’s affection for God’s Word there is mingled awe and reverence. That word lays a man bare to himself. It judges him ; it shows him what is in him, convinces him how much there is that needs to be purged, how far even one who loves it is from a perfect obedience. It is at once a copy of the will of God, and a mirror of the heart of man. Hence it calls forth the penitent confession, “As for errors, who can understand them?” And the prayer both to be absolved—pronounce me free—and to be kept from sin ; first for pardon, then for sanctification. *Errors*, sins both of ignorance and infirmity, those which are done unintentionally and unconsciously. *Secret faults*, lit., things hidden—*i.e.*, not only from others but from our own hearts, through unobservance, through a too ready forgetfulness of them when observed, through the habit of self-deception, or even through their being wilfully cherished. *Presumptuous sins*—*i.e.*, done with a high hand ; ruling sins, which leave a man their helpless slave.

*John Calvin.*—For we are entangled in so many nets and snares of Satan that none of us can perceive the hundredth part of the evils that cleave to him.

*Jennings and Lowe* render the second sentence in ver. 12 thus, “Hold thou me innocent of those (sins) that I wot not of.” There may be sins of which even those of the



most tender conscience may be unconscious. Ver. 13 means, "Do more than acquit me of sins of ignorance, *restrain* me moreover from sins of presumption."

*Bishop A. Barry, D.D.*—In this psalm there is the mark for a deeper and humbler self-knowledge. The contemplation of God awakens the consciousness of imperfection and sin (Comp. Job xlii. 5, 6), wrought out far more fully than in the previous psalm (ver. 23), into the twofold prayer to be cleansed from unconscious sins of frailty, and to be kept from the presumptuous sins of wilfulness.

*Illustrations from Dr. A. Maclaren.*—The deceitfulness of sin. You remember the old story of the prisoner in his tower, delivered by his friend, who sent a beetle to crawl up the wall, fastening a silken thread to it, which had a thread a little heavier attached to that, and so on, and so on, each thickening in diameter until they got to a cable. That is how the devil has got hold of a great many of us. He weaves round us silken threads to begin with, slight, as if we could break them with a touch of our fingers, and they draw after them, as certainly as destiny, at each remove a thickening chain, until, at last, we are tied and bound, and our captor laughs at our mad plunges for freedom, which are as vain as a wild bull's in the hunter's nets.

*Deep-rootedness of Sin.*—Like some of those creeping weeds that lie underground, and put up a little leaf here and another one there, and you dig down, fancying that their roots are short, but you find that they grow creeping and tortuous below the surface, and the whole soil is full of them, so all sin holds on by one root.

*Sermons in Library.*—Sherlock on "Self-Examination," Works, Vol. ii. p. 182. J. Hewlett, "The Duty of Examining into Our Secret Faults," Vol. ii. p. 317. Sermons, T. Chevallier, "Secret Faults." Hulsean Lectures for 1827, p. 198. E. Payson, D.D., "Knowledge of One's Sins, a Difficult Acquisition," Works, Vol. ii. p. 392. J. H. Newman, "Secret

Faults," Parochial Sermons, Vol. i. p. 47. W. Paley, D.D., 'On Insensibility to Offences," Sermons, p. 248. C. Simeon's Works, vol. v. p. 113. C. J. Vaughan, D.D. (1847), Sermons, p. 159.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—Self-knowledge is a thing that never is accomplished and done. A man can never attain more than knowledge of himself *up to date*. Wholly unknown frailties and evil tendencies may be revealed in the new circumstances and relationships of the future. A general knowledge of himself a man may gain. He can only fill in particulars as his experience of life, and of himself in relation to life, unfolds. What a man soon finds out is, that a common-place survey of his conduct in the merely social relations of life brings him no satisfaction. He is conscious that all he can get while keeping in this sphere is a warped judgment of himself—he is sure to give himself more credit than he honestly feels he deserves. A man comes to examine himself in the more intimate sphere of his cherished thoughts, feelings, inclinations, motives, only when either the natural punishments of wilful wrong-doing set him upon self-searching; or the afflictions of God bring him into a humbled frame, to which the Divine revelations of self can be made. Or the Word of God, as the clothing of the holiness of God, is put alongside the man's self, and brings out to view, in the searching, revealing comparison, errors, secret faults, cherished but unsuspected evils, presumptuous sins. Lead on to show that what is true of the written word is even more true of the Living Word. Put Christ, in a testing way, alongside our "self," and verily the thoughts of our hearts must be revealed.

## XXXV.

### THE PLACE FOR WORSHIP.

“Our fathers worshipped in this mountain ; and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.”—JOHN iv. 20.

*Germ Thoughts.*—How terrible must be the *unrest* of a man whose religion is a thing merely of time, and place, and form ! This woman no sooner found a prophet than she began to open out the difficulty that oppressed her spirit, the dreadful uncertainty whether her *forms* were quite right. How greatly is this unrest intensified by the prejudices of man’s education and nationality ! This woman said nothing about worshipping the Father. It is just stern, exacting *God* that is worshipped in a *place*. It is only God the Father who can be worshipped in *spirit*.

Ver. 23. *Now is.*—Because in the manifestation of God the Son to men, worship was taken from *place* and put into *spirit*. Christ coming into the world and into humanity consecrated the world and humanity as His temple. (Illustrate how God came in the cloud and consecrated Solomon’s temple.) The childhood of humanity, while educating, may need place, form, and times. The manhood of humanity wants reality, soul, and the universal *now*. Spirit is opposed to place. Truth is opposed to form, unreality, ceremonial. The religion which Christ began for men has its place, every-where ;

its time, every-when ; and its form, every-way. It is soul-utterance, and that knows no earthly limitations.

*Scripture References.*—Deut. xii. 5 ; 2 Cor. iii. 17 ; 1 Kings ix. 3 ; 2 Chron. vii. 12 ; Mal. i. 11 ; 1 Tim. ii. 8 ; 2 Kings xvii. 29. For Gerizim, see Judges ix. 7.

*Exegetical and Expository Notes.*—*Edersheim.*—Deepest of all convictions to the Jew was that of their common *centre* ; strongest of all feelings was the love which bound him to Palestine and to Jerusalem, the city of God. . . . Nor was it with him a mere matter of patriotism, of history, or of association. It was a religious principle, a spiritual hope. No truth was more firmly rooted in the consciousness of all than that in Jerusalem alone men could truly worship.

The woman has no after-thought, no covert purpose in what she asks. All her life long she had heard that Gerizim was the mount of worship, the holy hill which the waters of the Flood had never covered ; and that the Jews were in deadly error. But here was an undoubted prophet, and he a Jew. Were they then in error about the right place of worship, and what was she to think or to do ? The Lord answers her question by leading her beyond all controversy : even on to the goal of all His teaching. So marvellously does He speak to the simple in heart. Only of present interest could such distinctions be—as between Gerizim and Jerusalem—Spirit is God ; and only worship in spirit and in truth could be acceptable to such a God.

*Dr. Plummer.*—The Samaritans contended that on Gerizim Abraham offered up Isaac, and afterwards met Melchizedek. A certain Manasseh, a man of priestly family, married the daughter of Sanballat, the Horonite, (Neh. xiii. 28), and was thereupon expelled from Jeru-

salem. He fled to Samaria, and helped Sanballat to set up a rival worship on Gerizim. It is uncertain whether the temple on Gerizim was built then (about B.C. 410), or a century later; but it was destroyed by John Hyrcanus, B.C. 130, after it had stood 200 years or more. . . . Those who would worship the Father, must rise above such distinctions of place.

*Olshausen.*—The Samaritans believed in a future great teacher, whom they called, the Converter. The true worship is here placed in opposition, not so much to that which is false, as to that which is imperfect. The worship of every infantile, undeveloped mind, must be limited to season and locality. The worship of God, in its highest sense, is that worship which is most homogeneous with the Divine Nature. In contrast with that state of restriction to time and place, in relation to God, which always presupposes the want of spiritual power and reality, another state is presented—viz., that of being filled with spirit and reality as the condition of true adherence to God.

The following lines are by Tersteegen, the Mystic :—

“Once I wanted place and time, for prayer and solitude,  
Now in thought I always pray, and always am alone.”

*H. W. Watkins, M.A.*—Place, and time, and words, and posture, and sounds, and all things from without, are important only so far as they aid in abstraction from the sensible world, and in elevation of the spirit within. The moment they distract, they hinder true worship. Ritual cannot be discussed without spiritual loss. Sincerity is not a test of acceptable worship, though it is a requisite. Bigots sincerely think they do God service. Worship “in truth,” is in harmony with the nature of the God whom we worship.

*Crit. Com.*—Observe the ingenious shifting of the subject from personal to public questions. Three pieces of information are given. 1. The point raised will soon cease to be of any moment, as there is to be a change of dispensation. 2. Samaritans are wrong as to the place, nature, and grounds of their worship. 3. God is a Spirit, and demands and invites a spiritual service. The woman talked simply of worship: Jesus brought before her the object of all acceptable worship—the Father.

*Neander.*—The answer of Christ has a two-fold reference: one to the existing stage of the Theocracy, thus answering the spirit of the woman's question: the other alluding to the higher stage of the Theocratic development, which He Himself introduced. Christ showed that the worship at Jerusalem was only preferred in view of the salvation which was to come forth thence, and that the superiority would cease at the time of its coming forth. He had to describe that era in which the question in dispute between Jews and Samaritans would wholly cease. To the worship of God, as previously conceived,—the sensuous, external worship, confined to special times and a fixed place—Christ opposes a worship limited by neither, but proceeding from the spirit, and embracing the whole being. Truth must be taken up into the life of the spirit, before it can utter spiritual worship. Truth is the Divine element of life, the link that binds the world of spirits to God, their original. Worship in spirit is opposed to that which is confined, wholly or chiefly, to isolated, outward acts. Worship in truth is opposed to that which adheres to sensuous types and images that only veil the truth.

*Webster and Wilkinson.*—Modern Samaritans go up to Mount Gerizim in solemn procession to worship, four



times a-year,—Passover, Pentecost, Feast of Tabernacles, and Day of Atonement. The Samaritans had but confused and incomplete knowledge of God, in consequence of rejecting all the Old Testament except the Pentateuch. . . . True worship would be an entirely spiritual act, subjectively as well as objectively spiritual, the act of a spirit towards the supreme Spirit.

*Dr. Pressensé.*—"Salvation is of the Jews," Jesus said, at the beginning of His ministry. There was, then, nothing revolutionary in His work; He marked its close connection with what had gone before it. But He knows also that He is inaugurating the definitive era of revelation. He does not claim to be merely the reformer and purifier of a degenerate worship. He claims to bring to maturity a religion which, casting its roots deep into the past, can find in Him alone its full development. He is not come to destroy, but to fulfil. The fulfilment implies the abolition of all that is transitory and preparatory.

*Sermons in Library.*—On ver. 24, Charnock, Vol. i. p. 258. On vers. 23, 24, Channing, Vol. ii. p. 188. Vers. 19–26, "Memoirs, Jonathan Glyde," p. 434. See also Cardinal Wiseman, "Lect. on Christ. Doctrine," Vol. i. p. 297.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—Introduction may concern the ideas of religion which the woman had; and the motives which led her so abruptly to ask her question. Opportunity may also be taken for recalling the history of the Samaritans, and the main features of the independent religion established for them. The religion into which a man is born is for him the right religion, until he is quite sure that he has found a worthier and better. No man has a right to take my birth-religion away, unless he can offer me what will more than replace it. Christ could more than

replace the woman's religion. In His reply to her, Jesus shows the glory, and the satisfying character, of the religion which He introduced. It removes men's worship from mere places, and particular forms, and centres it in the sincere expression of a man's spirit.

1. Religion apart from Christ. Men everywhere are found to have a worshipping instinct. The blindest among us can read the writing of one higher than himself in storm, sunshine, and the varied forces of Nature. The earliest forms of religion show man's recognition of powers beyond himself. Illus.—Man's way of personifying the forces of Nature. (1.) Apart from Christ, men only worship a God. Of themselves, men only discover the *natural* attributes of God. They become confused concerning His *moral* attributes. Why? Because they can only learn from the partial revelation of Nature, and they have only themselves to refer to as moral standards. The higher truths of God must necessarily be matters of revelation. This is especially true of the Divine Fatherhood, and Jesus lays stress on the fact, that worship is now due to the Father. A God may belong to a nation. A Father-God belongs to the world. (2.) Apart from Christ, men's worship is settled in places, times, and ceremonies. Illus.—*Places* by Mecca; Diana of the Ephesians; pilgrims to the Sepulchre; Sacred Cities of India. Illus.—*Times* by religion as a thing of festivals,—Jews, Samaritans, Mohammedans, Juggernaut, &c. Ceremonies need not be illustrated. Remind how these are multiplied in our day. There is use in *forms* so long as they help the expression of spiritual truth. But, apart from Christ, they become the means of satisfying us with that which is short of personal relations with God. (3.) Apart from Christ, men's worship differs in different nations. The

religion of the one God becomes a separator, not a uniter. Each nation has different conceptions, and its formulated religion corresponds. So, there is no possible brotherhood in man-made religions. 2. Religion in Christ. The worshipping instinct of man, guided and developed aright by an immediate and adequate revelation of God in Christ. (1.) In Christ men may worship a Father. Christ reveals *that*. He taught that God was a Father once. He is a Father still. He will be a Father to all sinful sons who, in penitence, will come home. (2.) In Christ, men worship in spirit. A father must want *such* seekers. What really makes any place sacred? The manifestation of God in it. Christ has thus consecrated Humanity. (3.) In Christ, men's worship is one and universal. It *is* one as respects all worshippers of the *Father*. It *is to be* one, at the final triumph of the Redeemer. The *Son* will bring all men to the Father. The large, loving-hearted sons of God can discern, even now, a union in Christ that is broad and deep and true, and evidently growing into the Christ-brotherhood of the future; the brotherhood of all who can "worship the Father in spirit and in truth."

## XXXVI.

### THE ANGELS OF THE CHILDREN.

“Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones: for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father, which is in heaven.”—MATT. xviii. 10.

*Germ Thoughts.*—Our Lord was speaking in the figurative style which is characteristic of the East. We can get an apprehension of our Lord’s precise thought, if we remember that we have photographs of the children—our own and other people’s children—on the dining-room mantel-shelf. They are always within sight, and always remind us of the children. The “angels of the children” are, to use modern figures, the photographs of the children, which keep the Heavenly Father ever reminded of His “little ones.”

One day I was in the bedroom of a very loving mother. On the mantel-shelf there was a pair of little child’s boots, which were evidently kept dusted and clean, but were never worn. They belonged to a little boy that mother had lost through fever, many years before. They were her angel reminders, and kept her little laddie ever in her mind’s eye, and in her heart’s love.

It is only bewildering to drag into this passage any “doctrine of angels.”

It is simply our Lord’s revelation of His Father’s interest in, and care for, every little child—every one of

them is either a son or a daughter of the Heavenly Father ; and He takes care to arrange somehow, so that every one of them shall be kept in mind. "He careth for you"—learn that He does by seeing how He cares for the children. He knows all that happens to them on earth ; all that we do to them ; and how we treat them. He knows—and this thought is full of tenderness—all the children that bear—in their sorrows and disability—the awful sin-burden that rests on humanity, and appears as error, vice, and heredity. Our Lord warns His disciples not to despise the "little ones." Lest we fail to be actively faithful in our various duties to them. And lest we fail to be passively, receptively, faithful in receiving influence from them. And what blessings we may gain from the children !

*Scripture References.*—Esther i. 14 ; Luke i. 19 ; see also Psalm xxxiv. 7 ; Zech. xiii. 7 ; Heb. i. 14. On ver. 3, note following references :—Ps. cxxxi. 2 ; Matt. xix. 14 ; Mark x. 14 ; Luke xviii. 16 ; 1 Cor. xiv. 20 ; 1 Peter ii. 2.

*Revised Version.*—"See that ye despise not." The word is given "Angels" in the A.V., and "angels" in the Revised Version. The Revised Version omits ver. 11, but puts it as a note in the margin.

*Expository and Exegetical Notes.*—A. Carr, M.A.—In vers. 5, 6, the thought of Jesus passes from the dispute among His disciples, to the care of His little ones, the young in faith, who, if they have the weakness, have also the humility of little children. After a brief digression (vers. 7-9), Christ's love for young disciples breaks out again in words. Let no one despise them. They have unseen friends in the court of heaven, who are ever in the presence of the King himself. There, at any rate,

they are not despised. It was for them especially that the Son of Man came to earth.

*Dean Plumptre.*—The child was still there (see ver. 2), perhaps still folded in the arms of Jesus, still the object of His care, even while He spake of the wider offences that “must needs come” upon the world at large. Looking at the frequency with which our Lord’s words were addressed to the thoughts of His hearers, it seems likely that the faces at least of some of the disciples betrayed, as they looked on the child, some touch of half-contemptuous wonder, that called for this prompt rebuke.

“In heaven their angels.” The words distinctly recognise the belief in guardian angels, intrusted each with a definite and special work. That guardianship is asserted in general terms in Psalm xxxiv. 7 ; xci. 11 ; Heb. i. 14, and elsewhere. What is added to the general fact here is, that those who have the guardianship of the little ones assigned to them, are among the most noble of the heavenly host, and are as the angels of the Presence, who, like Gabriel, stand before the face of God, and rejoice in the beatific vision (Luke i. 19). Our Lord adopts as His own the belief in the reality of the ministry of angels, and this at a time when the Sadducees, as a leading sect, were calling it in question.

*Dr. Edersheim.*—We seem to see Jesus still holding the child, and with evident reference to the Jewish contempt for that which is small, point to him and apply, in quite other manner than they had ever heard, the Rabbinic teaching about the angels. In the Jewish view, only the chiefest of the angels were before the face of God, within the curtained veil, or *pargod*, while the others, ranged in different classes, stood outside and awaited His behest. The distinction which the former



enjoyed was, always to behold His face, and to hear and know directly the Divine counsels and commands. This distinction was, therefore, one of knowledge ; Christ taught that it was one of love. Not the more exalted in knowledge, and merit, or worth, but the simpler, the more unconscious of self, the more receptive and clinging—the nearer to God. Look up from earth to heaven ; those representative, it may be, guardian, angels nearest to God, are not those of deepest knowledge of God's counsel and commands, but those of simple, humble grace and faith—and so learn, not only not to despise one of these little ones, but who truly is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Dr. Edersheim firmly asserts that the angelology and demonology of the New Testament was *not* derived from contemporary Judaism.

*On the Belief in Guardian Angels.*—Menander has the following verse :—

“ By every man, as he is born, there stands,  
A spirit good, a holy guide of life.”

John Farrar, in “Bib. and Theo. Dictionary,” says : “As to each individual being under the care of a guardian angel, the Scriptures do not support the notion. Ps. xxxiv. 7, and Matt. xviii. 10, are generally referred to as proof of this opinion ; but they have certainly no such meaning. Many of the Christian Fathers held that there are two angels, one good and the other bad, attendant on each individual. The heathen held it in a modified form : the Greeks had their tutelary *demon*, and the Latins their *genius*.”

*Biblical Treasury on Text.*—The expression appears to allude to the custom of human courts, where those distinguished personages who are high in office and

favour appear most frequently in the royal palaces and presence. The expression was familiar to the Jews, as appears from various passages of the Old Testament ; and in speaking of the chief angels, the Jewish writers were used to describe them as those "who behold the face of the King ;" or, who are worthy to come before the King : meaning by "the King," God, the King of kings.

*Exegetical.—Olshausen.*—The ground is a peculiar one, of which our Lord here avails himself to enforce the exhortation against despising the little ones. He brings forward their preciousness in the view of His Father in heaven. The expression, "behold the face," &c., is by no means to be reduced to a mere piece of oriental phraseology ; it rather describes simply the reality of the existing relationship. . . . The passage contains something obscure, for there are no others by comparison with which light may be cast on it. Perhaps in regard to these angels, we may be reminded of the pre-existent ideal of man himself, so that the angels would correspond to the *fervers* of Zoroaster. (On this conception compare the "correspondences" of Swedenborg.)

*Dean Alford.*—Note the connection of the text. As Mark, a strife among the disciples as to who should be greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Our Lord's answer is, the child-like are the greatest ; they are much in the thought, and nearest to the Father, to the Presence of the Father in heaven. The child-lesson taught is that of submission and trustfulness. A child is a pattern of humility.

The plain sense of the second clause is this—To individuals certain angels are allotted as their special attendants, or guardians. Those angels whose honour is high before God, are intrusted with the charge of the

humble and meek, the children in age, and the children in grace.

*Stier* thinks the doctrine of angelic tutelage is sadly neglected in our age.

*Webster and Wilkinson* think "angels" mean "their spirits after death," and refer to Acts xii. 15.

*Sermons in Library*.—Ward Beecher's *Sermons*, Vol. i. p. 511. Adam Littleton, D.D., *Sermons*, p. 119. Bishop Prideaux, A Sermon on "The Patronage of Angels." Johnson Grant's "Guardian Spirits," *Discourses* (1843), p. 168.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon*.—Fix attention on the Christly command, "Not to *despise* one of these little ones;" and let the point of argument be this—Remember that you are the sons of the Heavenly Father, and therefore you ought to care for everyone for whom the Father cares. He cares for the children so much that He arranges to have the reminders of them ever before Him. While there is here chiefly in mind the child *image*, the applications may also be made to the young and simple *believer*, over whose first movements in the Divine life we may be sure our Father cares, and therefore we should care too.

Work out this thought. Anxiety about who should be greatest in the Apostolic company, was the indication of a demoralising *self-centredness*. This takes various, and very subtle forms. It is an evil with which it is most difficult to deal. Perhaps we cannot wisely deal with it *directly*. "Self" is only expelled by the "expulsive power of a new affection." So our Lord meets the need of His disciples in the wisest way, when He virtually says: "Set your love on God, and you will surely find you will come to love whatever God loves, and to care for whatever God cares. He who lives

with God in love will be sure to *see* the images—the reminders, of those whom God loves, and for whom He cares. And then he will cease to think about *himself*, and will find both his dignity and his joy in *serving* those for whom God the Father cares.”

This is the proper way for a Christ-disciple to regard the young, the weak, the poor, the suffering. Does God love them? Does God care for them? Does God ever keep their images and reminders before Him? Then *we* must keep their images and reminders before *us*, and be as ready to serve, and help, and cheer, and bless them, as our Father is.

## XXXVII.

### WHAT CAN BE SEEN THROUGH TEARS?

“And as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre.”

—JOHN XX. II.

*Germ Thoughts.*—Tears must come. Tears may come. Tears never need keep us from looking. Through tears the emptiness of the sepulchre may be seen, and the full meaning of that emptiness may be realised. Show what Christ saw through His tears, before Jerusalem, at Bethany, and at Gethsemane—a doomed city; a broken heart; a Father’s will. Still, and even in our spheres, what may Christian souls see through their tears?

Some of our life-sorrows tend to make us dry and hard, in them we cannot weep, and, for that very reason, in them there is peculiar moral peril. In other of our life-sorrows we are made tearful. Both kinds have their particular mission; but the ones that make us tearful are the more hopeful ones. With a dry eye there is little insight; moisture may dim physical vision, but it deepens spiritual vision. Through our tears we may see the unseen.

*Scripture References.*—Mark xvi. 5; ix. 24; Luke vii. 38; Heb. v. 7; Job xvi. 20.

*Various Renderings.*—Revised Version reads, “But Mary was

standing without at the tomb weeping: so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb."

*Exegetical and Expository Notes.*—Help toward realising the actual tomb of Jesus. Sir J. W. Dawson, F.R.S., writes:—"The settlement of the site of the crucifixion (as the 'Knoll of the Skull') would settle that also of the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, for John informs us that 'in the place was a garden,' and in the garden a tomb. Now it so happens that to this day little gardens occupy the level ground at the foot of the Skull-Knoll, and on the borders of these gardens are tombs. One of these, which I visited with Dr. Merrill, on the west side of the hill, and at the edge of a little garden of beans, is of particular interest, as recalling very nearly the probable appearance of the new tomb of Joseph. According to the Gospels, this was small, and of one chamber, allowing the body to be seen from the door. The door was low, so that one had to stoop to look in, and it was closed by a circular stone arranged to be rolled in a groove so as to open and shut the entrance, like that still *in situ* at the great 'Tomb of the Kings,' or 'Tomb of Helena,' north of Jerusalem. The tomb referred to was a single low chamber, excavated in a ledge of rock, with a marble slab, now placed on edge to form a bin, but which seems at one time to have stood on stone supports, like a couch. The entrance had no door, and was too large to have been closed by a rolled stone, but there were some signs that it might have been enlarged. It is now obstructed by accumulated earth, which has considerably raised the level of the ground since it was cut. I confess that this neglected tomb was a more impressive memento of that into which Mary, John, and Peter looked on the morning of the resurrection, than the marble-lined and decorated



chamber in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre" ("Egypt and Syria," pp. 108, 109).

*Dr. W. M. Thomson* explains the family custom of making cave, or rock-tombs. "All these eastern hills are full of tombs. They are of all sizes, and the internal arrangements are very various. Most of them consist of a square, or oblong room, perpendicular to the sides of which the niches for the bodies extend six or seven feet into the rock. I have counted sixteen of these in a single room; but we need not suppose they were all hewn at the same time, or even in the same age. A family selected a cave, if one could be found, which they trimmed and squared, and cut in it as many niches as they expected to need. Their posterity would hew new ones as occasion required; and when the original room was full, they cut out another behind, or at the side of it, and thus went on enlarging from generation to generation, as long as the family existed" ("Land and Book," p. 106).

*Dr. Cunningham Geikie* says:—"Caves were mostly reserved for tombs, as may be seen from the shelves for the dead hewn out in their sides. . . . Many of the sepulchres are mere holes for bodies hewn in the face of the hill."

*Van Lennep* says:—"The 'new tomb' cut out of the rock in which our Lord was laid, consisted of a single chamber, as do most of the similar tombs at Jerusalem, and the door was low, as usual. The angel who swung open the heavy stone door for Jesus to come forth, sat or rested upon it, with his feet on the ground. Many suppose that the door was closed by means of large boulder, which was "rolled" up to the entrance, or a huge block, which was made to lean upon it. But nothing of this sort appears ever to have been in use.

*Expository Notes.*—*Prof. H. W. Watkins, M.A.*—Mary had gone back as soon as she saw that the stone was taken away, and had told the disciples of what she found. She was left behind by them, in their haste to reach the sepulchre. But she has followed them, and now that they have returned with the joy of a new and fuller faith, she remains without the sepulchre, not venturing to enter, and, giving vent in tears to the sorrow that weighs upon her heart: “looked into,” the word meant originally (ver. 5) to stoop sideways, and was used of a harp player, then to stoop over, peer into, inquire into. The feeling of Mary is indicated in ver. 2, which is the passionate cry of her woman’s heart. They have not only crucified the Lord, but they have robbed the body of the resting-place which love had provided for it, and of the tender care with which love was seeking to surround it.

*Dr. A. Plummer.*—She (Mary) had returned to the sepulchre after the hurrying disciples. Mark xvi. 9, states definitely, what we gather from this section, that the risen Lord’s first appearance was to Mary Magdalene, the details of the meeting are given by St. John alone.

“Stood,”—continued standing, after the other two had gone.

Ver. 12. “Seeth”; or beholdeth, as in ver. 6, implying a long contemplative gaze. This is the only place where angels appear in St. John’s narrative.

*J. F. Vallings, M.A.*—Not one soul expected the resurrection. The faith of the disciples was at its lowest pressure. The grief, the surprise, the indignation, the physical pain, which overwhelmed them on Friday stifled hope. The Lord’s promises were forgotten, crowded out by the storm and stress of present affliction. Great grief has no past or future. It is all-present,

overwhelming, catastrophic. . . . The disciples were baffled, beaten, defeated as a party, dispirited, disintegrated as a body, not only were they wounded in their tenderest affections, but their Messianic beliefs and hopes were assailed at all points.

[Add to this the special features of distress characteristic of *woman* at such times.—ED.]

*Dr. Edersheim.*—The love of the Magdalene could not rest satisfied, while doubt hung over the fate of His sacred body. It must be remembered that she only knew of the empty tomb. (Query, Did she know any more than that the door had been removed? She *suspected* the rest.) For a time she gave way to the agony of her sorrow; then, as she wiped away her tears, she stooped to take one more look into the tomb, which she thought empty, when, as she “intently gazed,” the tomb seemed no longer empty. At the head and feet, where the Sacred Body had lain, were seated two angels in white. . . . So is it often with us, that, weeping, we ask the question of doubt or fear, which, if we only knew, would never have risen to our lips. . . . As the Magdalene spake, she became conscious of another presence close to her. He said, “Woman why weepest thou?”

*Dean Farrar.*—Turning her head aside as she addressed Him, perhaps that she might hide her streaming tears, she exclaimed:—“Oh, Sir, if you took Him away, tell me where you put Him, and I will take Him.” Jesus saith to her, “Mary.” That one word, in those awful yet tender tones of voice, at once penetrated to her heart. . . . Jesus Himself gently checked the passion of her enthusiasm.

*Dr. Whedon.*—“As she wept.” Half uncovering her face, and momentarily looking in. Ver. 14. “Turned

herself back." Simply her recoil from her stooping posture, and turning to her natural position. "Knew not that it was Jesus." Her eyes doubtless being half-covered with weeping, she did not fully glance at Him until she fully turned round.

*Sermons in Library.*—R. Cecil's "Original Thoughts," p. 453. J. Cawood's *Sermons*, Vol. ii. p. 165. E. Blencowe's "Plain Sermons," Vol. ii. p. 218. Bishop Andrewes' *Sermons*, Vol. iii. p. 3.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermons.*—Through her tears Mary saw the sepulchre empty, and Jesus by her side.

The introduction may be a realistic word-picture of the scene, with indication of the naturalness and reasonableness of Mary's tears. Our Lord's most tender and gracious dealing with His *women*-disciples needs much closer, and more sympathetic, attention. His work of grace was done both to male and female. What would be the feelings of blessed, healed, women? Their intense, unquestioning, absolutely trustful love. Its emotional character. It could only find small occasions of expression during our Lord's living ministry. Such as the home-tending of Bethany. In the hours of sorrow and death woman-love burst all bonds and restraints.

Explain how it was that women accompanied our Lord's party on the last occasion. Women were not *bound* to attend the feasts, but they might do so if they wished. Perhaps the mysterious feeling seized these women (which we have felt in some emergencies of life), that it was the last time they would be with Him. A feeling scarcely definable, but strong enough to prompt action.

One woman comes prominently forward in the closing scenes of our Lord's life. Give some account of Mary Magdalene. Hers a strong and well-defined individuality. Much blessed, she loved much. In passionate intensity, she is the female of John.

Pass in review how the women watched the cross. It was *through their tears* that they watched Him *die*. But women's tears do not make them helpless. When Joseph gained the right to take away and bury our Lord's body, the women, feeling that the men would not embalm Him aright, planned to do the work properly as soon as the Sabbath was over. Give the incidents. Mary was presently left alone, in tears, by what she thought was a rifled sepulchre.

What did she see through her tears? A vacant body-place; guardian angels, with a message for her; and the conscious presence of the Risen Saviour Himself.

Is not this suggestive for us? Looking back over our lives, what blessed things we have seen through our tears. Tears must come, and do come, into every life. Some of our human sorrows do but stiffen and harden us, and make us bitter. It is well for us when they break us down into weeping. What are the kinds of sorrow that draw tears? Not bereavements only; but heart-crushing disappointments, failing friendships, and sympathetic interest in the sufferings of others.

And tears *may* come. There is no sin in tears. They are the proper response for which Nature arranges; and they are tender and humbling in their influence. They need never keep us from looking. They should be a medium through which we look; a medium necessary if we would see some things clearly. Tears should never be blinding. They should never prevent

sight ; they should always help and perfect sight. Through tears the deepest and best things may be seen, and thus they will be rightly seen.

*Illustrations from the Case of our Lord.*—Three times it is recorded of Him that He *wept*. Have we fully apprehended the glory of a Redeemer who could, and did, weep? Over Jerusalem—through tears He saw lost souls. At the grave of Lazarus—through tears, He saw broken hearts. In Gethsemane—through tears, He saw a Father's redeeming will. What have we seen through tears? and what may we have to see through tears? The Father's hand that provides and guides; the empty sepulchre, and full redemption; the real living Saviour close beside us. (This last sight may not come just at first; but Jesus will help the vision with a *word*, as He helped Mary.) When we think of our tears, and recognise what we have seen through them, the bitterness of them goes, and they become but tears of trust and love. Are you looking back on the past through tears? down on the present through tears? or, on to the future through tears. Let this persuasion come to you—First, look up through your tears into the face of Jesus; and then, holding His hand, look back, look down, look on, and you will surely see wondrous things through your tears.



## XXXVIII.

### A PRESENT EVIL WORLD.

“Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God, and our Father.”—GALATIANS i. 4.

*Germ Thoughts.*—The *moral* character of the Christian redemption was the feature of it which St. Paul saw so clearly. It is this feature of it which is still so imperfectly apprehended. A conflict always will be raging between the material and the spiritual conceptions of redemption. Man will always be striving to materialise spiritual things, and God will always be at work recovering and liberating the spiritual. Our Lord, and His Apostles, were ever trying to help men to reach the spiritual, which is behind and within the material. And this is the work that we still have to do. The Christian redemption is the moral redemption of men—of souls—first, and then it comes to be a redemption of bodies, and lives, and associations. “The creature itself, also, *shall be*, delivered from the bondage of corruption.” The soul *is* delivered; the creature *shall be*.

In this text the will of our Father-God concerning us, is stated as being—our deliverance from this present evil world; and we have to think out the gracious ways in which that will accomplishes its purpose. Plainly, man

is world-enslaved. But what does that mean and involve? And are the bonds beyond his own breaking? What can break the world-bonds? A fiat of Omnipotence? No! Why not? Because, in creating moral beings, God has been pleased to limit Himself to the exertion of moral forces on them. It is precisely our dignity that we are moral beings, and are treated as such. What is liberating a slave? What is liberating a prodigal son? Contrast these two most distinct things. Show how the Lord Jesus, giving Himself for our sins, becomes such a persuasion upon us that He becomes a delivering power. He wins us away from that which enslaves us, because He wins our love for Himself. He who gets my love gets Me. St. Paul himself is the example. He was freed from world-bonds by his enthusiasm for Christ. Believing love to Christ breaks off the world's chains, and we are free.

*Scripture References.*—Matt. xx. 28; Rom. iv. 25; Gal. ii. 20; Titus ii. 14; Isa. lxxv. 17; John xv. 19; xvii. 14; Heb. ii. 5; vi. 5; 1 John v. 19.

*Various Renderings.*—For “evil world,” read “evil world age.” The Revised Version renders thus:—“Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us out of this present evil world (or age), according to the will of our God and Father.”

*Exegetical and Expository Notes.*—*Dean Farrar.*—The greeting is remarkable, not only for the emphatic assertion of his independent apostleship, and for the skill with which he combines, with this subject of his epistle, the great theologic truth of our free deliverance by the death of Christ; but, also, for the stern brevity of the terms with which he greets those to whom he is writing.

*Bp. Lightfoot.*—“Deliver” strikes the keynote of this epistle.

*Dr. Sanday.*—"Gave Himself"—surrendered Himself—of His own free act and will, to those who sought His death. The phrase has a parallel in Titus ii. 14; and appears in its full and complete form in the Gospel saying: "The Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. xx. 28; Mark x. 45); and in 1 Tim. ii. 6: "Who gave Himself a ransom for all" (the word is here a compound, which brings out more strongly the sense of vicariousness).

"For our sins."—In the Greek there are three prepositions which can only be translated by the single word "for" in English. The first has, for its primary sense, "concerning," or "relating to;" it merely marks a connection, or relation, between two facts. The second has rather the sense, "in behalf of," "in the interests of." The third means strictly, "in place of." The first is naturally used in respect of "things"; the second and third, of "persons." The death of Christ was a sacrifice *for sins*—i.e., the sins of mankind stood in a distinct relation to it, which was really that of cause. The sins of mankind it was which set the whole scheme of redemption in motion; and to take away those sins was its main object. The first of these meanings is represented by *peri*, the second by *huper*, and the third by *anti*. It is somewhat doubtful which of the first two prepositions is to be read in this text. By far the majority of MSS. have *peri*. The Codex Vaticanus, and one of the corrections of the Sinaitic MS., have *huper*. Probably *peri* is the right reading; and then it is simply stated in the text that the sins of men, and the sacrifice of Christ, have a relation to each other. If there had been no sin, there would have been no redemption.

"Deliver us." The deliverance present to the mind

of the apostle appears to be rather (in technical language) that of sanctification than that of justification. The object of redemption is regarded for the moment as being to deliver men from *sin*, and not so much to deliver them from guilt, the consequence of sin. The atonement has really both objects, but it is the first that the apostle has in view in this passage.

"This present evil world." The emphasis is on the word "evil"—"this present world, with all its evils." "This present world" is, strictly, "this present age." It was a transition period, the close of the older dispensation of things, in which the apostles regarded themselves as living. The iniquities of the pagan society around them would naturally give them an intense longing for release; but the release which they seek is moral and spiritual. They do not so much pray that they may be "taken out of the world," as that they may be "kept from the evil." This, the Christian scheme, duly accepted and followed, would do. The Galatians had fallen back upon the notion of a legal righteousness, through the vain attempt to keep the commandments of the law.

*Dean Alford.*—He thus, *obiter*, reminds the Galatians, who wished to return to the bondage of the law, of the great object of the Atonement, which they had forgotten, Chap. iii. ver. 13 is but a restatement, in more precise terms, of this. "Gave Himself," as an offering, unto death. [May it not mean, "devoted Himself to this particular service, the delivering men from this present evil world.—ED.] The expression is only found (in N.T.) here and in the Pastoral Epistles. The present, not the coming, evil age, or state of things—*i.e.*, the course of this present evil world. "According to the will," &c., not according to our own plan of legal obedience, but according to the Father's sovereign will, the

prime standard of all the process of redemption. Not so that we may trifle with such rescuing purposes of Christ, by mixing it with other schemes and fancies, seeing that it is according to a procedure prescribed by Him who doeth all things after the counsel of His own will, and this not merely as lord of all His works, but as "our Father," bound to us in ties of closest love.

*Ellicott.*—"Gave Himself," to death. At the outset is specified the active principle of the error of the Galatians. The doctrine of the atoning death of Jesus Christ, and a recurrence to the laws of Moses, were essentially incompatible with each other. "Deliver" derives from the context the idea of rescuing us from danger. The present evil state of things—an evil age as it is.

*Webster and Wilkinson.*—This addition to the salutation is peculiar. Paul would at once remind the erring Churches of the pure and simple Gospel he preached. "Gave Himself." Christ's voluntary devotion of Himself, and that to death, for the sake of man. "Deliver" is always used in N.T. of *evil*, an enemy, or bondage. The act of deliverance which Christ, in virtue of His sacrifice, performs for us now is necessarily a rescue from the bondage of sin as well as from guilt and its consequences.

*Critical Commentary.*—"For our sins," which enslaved us to the present evil world. "Deliver" is the very word used by the Lord as to His deliverance of Paul himself. See Acts xxvi. 17. "World," or "age," the system or course of this world regarded from a religious point of view.

*Sermons in Library.*—Martin Luther's "Select Works," Vol. i. p. 270. Oliver Heywood's Works, Vol. v. p. 492.

C. Simeon's Works, Vol. xvii. p. 1. Hon. G. T. Noel's Sermons, Vol. ii. p. 415. Joseph Jowett's Lectures, p. 257.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—There is something unusual and peculiar about this salutation. Into a short sentence St. Paul puts the very essence of the Gospel, the point about the Gospel which would supply the corrective of the Galatian error. He declares the full and final deliverance from world-maxims, world-laws, world-allurements, which men have in Christ Jesus, and he asserts that, as the will of God our Father for us is our complete redemption from the world, they must be wholly wrong who would drag Christian believers back again into the bondage of the weak and beggarly elements, as the Judaizing teachers were so strenuously endeavouring to do. St. Paul was jealous, with an exceeding jealousy over this *present* delivering and saving power of the living, present, and almighty Saviour. It is quite possible for us to be unduly absorbed in the mystery of the reconciliation or atonement. Christian people too often are satisfied with asking, "How shall man be *just* with God?" There is another question which ought to be of even more absorbing interest, "How can man be *clean* before his Maker?" In the Lord Jesus is the answer to *that* question, as it concerns the justified and reconciled. "He purifieth unto Himself a peculiar people." "He delivers from this present evil world."

1. The will of our Father-God concerning us, "That we might be delivered from this present evil world." That surely is a father-like thought and purpose. The moral rescue, the renewed character, the freedom in righteousness of men are not things which we readily attach to our idea of a great king, an Almighty God, or even a wise Moral Governor. But they are precisely



the things that must be the longing and seeking of the burdened, anxious, loving Father-heart.

Distinguish between what would be the design of a king concerning his *subjects* in sin, and what would be the design of a father concerning his *children* in sin. The king wants rebellion put down, and he is prepared, on right grounds, to grant forgiveness, in order that proper relations may be restored. The father is burdened on account of the wrong state of mind and heart of his children, and will put himself to the utmost limits of self-sacrifice if only he can recover and restore. A Father-God can seek for His children nothing better than this, that they might be delivered from this present evil world. A father alone can estimate aright our bondage to this "present evil world." How would that father, of whom Christ told us, think about His wilful, prodigal boy? Surely just as the Father-God thinks of us. He would say to himself often, "Poor, foolish boy, he would not have the freedom of the obedient child at home, so he has given himself over to be bound hand and foot, and head and heart, by self, and vice, and the world." The father saw him enslaved by the wilfulness, enslaved by the riotous living, enslaved by the harlots, enslaved by the famine, fettered by the galling fetters of the world, and self, and sin. The lad fancied he was free, away thus from the restraints of home, and righteousness, but the father knew that he was bound in degrading bonds, and being dragged down to uttermost shame. And what do we really feel is *our* bondage? Surely it is, the slavery of self, the fetters of the world, the strange, and often over-mastering, of the "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." Our real trouble is the wrong-heartedness out of which our acts of sin come; it is our *sinfulness* rather than our *sin*. Such is

our enslaved condition, that the world pleases us more than God, earth is more beautiful than heaven, and our pleasure is more attractive than our Father's will.

2. The gracious way in which our Father works out His will ; He sends us Jesus Christ, who "gave Himself for us, that he might deliver us from this present evil world." The Lord Jesus, the Divine Son, is fetter-breaker for the Father. He is liberator of enslaved prodigals for the Father. To this work He "gave Himself," devoted Himself, gave His whole self. Everything necessary to enable Him to accomplish His Father's will He did. Whatever rights were to be met, Jesus met them. Whatever laws were to be honoured, Jesus honoured them. Whatever sacrifice had to be made, Jesus made it.

But it is well to fix thought on this—Jesus gained the power to break our fetters off. He devoted Himself wholly, that so He might gain power over your circumstances, and over your enemies, and over your heart, the power to liberate, to redeem, to save, and to sanctify.

Christ becomes a delivering power to us by winning our love to Himself. All the man goes out to whomsoever his love goes. If Christ can gain and hold my love—my supreme, my first love—then surely He delivers me from all lower things, from self, from the present world, and from sin.

## XXXIX.

### JEALOUSY OVER A PURE SPIRIT.

“Cast me not away from Thy presence ; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.”—PSALM li. II.

*Germ Thoughts.*—The explanation of this passage is very dependent on its association with the feelings of David when recovering from his grievous fall. The objections to that association are not serious enough to make it unreasonable. But, failing David, it is necessary to create a person similarly circumstanced to David, in order to recognise the point and force of this prayer. His self-indulgence, and failure in self-restraint, had brought this as its first punishment, a befouling of his own spirit. He reasonably feared that this would involve a removal of that presence of God the Spirit with him, seeing that God's pure Spirit could only dwell with a pure spirit. It is necessary to keep well in mind Old Testament associations with God the Spirit, for we must not bring into this passage the precise ideas that are connected with God the Spirit after Pentecost.

The point to keep before us, in dealing with the text, is this—God seals, with the presence of His Spirit, whatever spirit is cherished in the heart of His people. He is to us relative to what we are. “To the pure Thou wilt show Thyself pure.” Then, when David felt that

he had lost His own pure spirit, he very properly feared that he might lose God's pure Spirit too.

*Scripture References.*—2 Kings xiii. 23 ; Isaiah lxiii. 10 ; Rom. viii. 9 ; Eph. iv. 30 ; 1 Thess. v. 19 ; 2 Cor. iii. 17.

*Exegetical and Expository Notes.*—A. S. Aglen, M.A.—The one great corruption to which all religion is exposed is its separation from morality ; and of all religions, that of Israel was pre-eminently open to this danger. The criticism of David's authorship makes much of the last two verses, which may have been no part of the original psalm, but a liturgical addition. The association of the psalm with individual experience of sin, and repentance from it, are now far too close to be broken. "Right spirit," in ver. 10, is better, as margin, "constant," or "steadfast." "Cast me not away." This phrase is used of the formal rejection of Israel by the God of the Covenant (2 Kings xvii. 20 ; xxiv. 20 ; Jer. vii. 15). "Take not thy holy spirit." Either the spirit of office given to the king on his anointing (1 Samuel xvi. 3), or the spirit of grace.

*Dr. Alfred Barry.*—Vers. 9–12 describe the renewal, there hopefully prayed for, with singular vividness, in phrases rising to a glorious climax—from "cleanness of heart" to "rightness" (properly "constancy") of the renewed soul ; then to consciousness of a divine "spirit of holiness" still within us, and through it a royal "freedom of spirit" (the princely heart of innocence), defying the bondage both of sin and of fear.

*Jennings and Lowe* prefer to assign a later origin to the psalm. Think it is post-exilic. Reasons are :—1. Composition too smooth in style and grammar for David. 2. The disparaging view of sacrifice, which belongs to the times of the later prophets. 3. The last two verses must be part of the original composition. The expres-

sion "build thou the walls of Jerusalem" was in everybody's mouth in the post-exilic age. Ver. 10.—*Create*. So far the penitent is represented as praying only that God might deliver him from the punishment of his sins; now he prays for inward purity. The word "create" is used in Gen. i. 1. It implies that the purification of the heart requires, as it were, a fresh act of creative power. See Titus iii. 5. "Right," steadfast; a spirit steadfastly purposed to lead a new life.

Ver. 11.—*Holy spirit*; if applied to David, this may mean that spirit of office which came upon David when he was anointed King. But it is equally admissible to take the term as meaning the Spirit of Grace, the Divine Nature as manifesting itself in influencing the moral nature of man. The Holy Spirit is not spoken of in the Hebrew Scriptures as a person, but as an influence. The points in this psalm are full confession, seeking pardon, inward renewal, restoration in humility to outward privilege.

*Dean Perowne* earnestly contends for Davidic origin of the psalm. Ver. 10.—*Clean heart*—the necessary condition of communion with God. The pure heart, and the child-like feeling of confidence could only return as a new creation. Ver. 11.—The petition expresses the holy fear of the man who has his eyes open to the depth and iniquity of sin, lest at any moment he should be left without the succour of that Divine Spirit who was the only source in him of every good thought, every earnest desire, every constant resolution. It is the cry of one who knows, as he never knew before, the weakness of his own nature, . . . to whom nothing seems so dreadful as that God should withdraw His Spirit. David could hardly have understood by the Holy Spirit a Divine Person. Luther strikingly illustrates the close and intimate union of the Spirit of God with the spirit

of man, by saying that the latter, under the influence of the former, is like *water heated by fire*.

"*Book of Psalms*" (Tract Society). Ver. 12.—*Free spirit*; willing, generous spirit, prompting the obedience of love, the "spirit of adoption," as opposed to the "spirit of bondage." Liddon—"With thy princely spirit." Prayer-book version—"Stablish me with thy free spirit." Douay version—"Strengthen me with a perfect spirit."

*Phillips*.—Cast me not from Thee, as an odious and detestable thing, so that I shall experience thy displeasure permanently. We read of Jehovah casting off Kings of Israel. He had rejected Saul, and David fears the rejection of himself. Context shows that the writer alludes to the ordinary influences of the Spirit of God, to His renewing and sanctifying power, of which the Psalmist stood in need to remove from his heart and affections the moral defilement he had contracted by the crimes which he had committed, to enable him to return to a holy life.

*Matthew Henry*.—David does not deprecate the temporal judgments which God by Nathan had threatened to bring upon him. If the sword is never to depart from my house, yet let me have a God to go to in my distresses, and all shall be well.

*Scientific and Literary Biblical Difficulties*, p. 441.—The writer of this psalm had no "doctrine of the Holy Spirit;" no idea of those distinctions in the Divine Being which are so familiar to us. We require to be very careful, therefore, in putting our ideas into his mind, and reading our doctrinal ideas into his writings. The "Holy Spirit" of verse 11, and the "free spirit" of verse 12, are not the third person of the Trinity, but the spirit of purity, as contrasted with the spirit of sensuality; the spirit of liberty as contrasted with the bondage to evil which had enslaved and degraded the psalmist.



*Illustrative Notes.*—"The Psalms at Work," C. L. Marson. This has been *the* psalm to many of the sternest and most active-minded men; for instance, St. Bernard, who heard its cadences as the first prelude to his monastic life, and loved it best. Indeed, when Dante saw the heavenly rose of saints round God's throne, St. Bernard pointed out Ruth to him as "the ancestress of him who wrote the *Miserere*." The same Dante heard it in Purgatory, chanted by the spirits of those who had delayed repentance till their violent death. It was sung at great humiliations and repentances; by those, for instance, who were absolved from excommunication; by King John at Winchester, in A.D. 1213. Hardly any holy men died on a death-bed, or at a scaffold, or at a stake, without breathing out the unworn passion of this great prayer. Savonarola, just before his death, with his hand trembling from the torture, wrote upon it a wonderful commentary, which some influential people—probably inspired by Colet—tried to have inserted in our Prayer-Book, as a passion meditation, in the Reformation times. The opening sentences of this meditation Cranmer repeated on his knees in St. Mary's, Oxford, before he was burnt. Sir Thomas More repeated the psalm on the scaffold; Rowland Taylor, while he was burning (1555) said it, and was struck on the mouth for not saying it in Latin; just as Alexander Brian, Robert Johnstone, and William Filbie, Romanists, who would not betray Parsons the Jesuit, at their execution were ill-treated for not saying it in English. When Dr. Arnold knew he was dying, and was asked what should be read to him, he answered instantly, "The fifty-first Psalm."

*Sermons in Library.*—Bossuet's Sermons, Vol. ix. p. 134. C. Simeon's Works, Vol. v. p. 414. E. B. Pusey, D.D., Sermons, Vol. ii. p. 181. J. Cawood's Sermons, Vol. i. p. 269. A. Farindon's Sermons, Vol. iii. p. 563.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—The value of the Psalms as expressions of Christian experience, lies in our conviction of their truthfulness. They are mirrors

of our own experience. They are the experiences of sincere men, not time-servers, not sectarians, not hypocrites. In the psalm we have the experiences of a man who has fallen into grievous sin, and been aroused to deep conviction of sin. An awakened man is sure to have a feeling that his sin has disturbed the relations between his soul and God. He finds—I. The spiritual fellowship is gone. 2. The inward joy, and the trustful dependence are gone. 3. The actual witness and help of the Spirit is imperilled. Look at this subject not as a *doctrine* of the Holy Spirit, but as the witness of the deepest convictions of the soul. Not as an assertion of the Church, but as an assertion of the soul. Let a soul but be sincere, serious, and true, it will attest these two things. I. All real spiritual life in man must be the working of the Spirit of God. The Lord, helping man, *is the Spirit*, whatever name we may give to the help. Observe this help in its three stages—I. Old Testament Times. 2. New Testament Times. 3. Present Experience. II. The living presence of the Spirit in our souls must be imperilled by the sins of the Christian life. The imperilling is found more especially in connection with sins that take us off dependence on God. The sins may be acts of wilfulness and transgression, or they may be a cherished wrong, or impure spirit. When we become convicted of sin, the damage which sin has done, and is doing, to our souls, oppresses us far more than the mere items of transgression. They have *stained* us, and we know that God cannot dwell with the stained. If this be our conviction, then every means of watchfulness, and effort, and prayer should be used to keep with us the sure, indwelling, witnessing, sealing Holy Spirit.

## XL.

### THE CHURCH OF THE FIRST-BORN.

"To the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven."—HEB. xii. 23.

*Germ Thoughts.*—The writer of this epistle has an unusually rhetorical style. It might well have been written by the eloquent Apollos. But it is not wise to force an eloquent and rhetorical passage to yield too exact meanings. It does its work by interesting and impressing, not by teaching. Goethe says, "Eloquence does not *teach*." We may not be too precise in explaining the passage of which this text forms a part. The expression, "Church of the first-born," is a striking and suggestive one. What seems to be in it is, that the redeemed ones are "born" ones, brought out into a new life. That of these "born" ones there are two Churches or Assemblies—the Church of the *first-born*, and the Church of the *second-born*. These two Churches become united, and constitute the permanent and eternal Church of the God-born sons and daughters. The Church of the first-born is the church of the saints within Judaism. They are thought of as all dead, and their names are enrolled in heaven. The Church of the second-born is the Church of Christ on earth, and its names are written on the earthly Church-roll. But spiritually they are one. What is common to all is *life in God*.

*Scripture References.*—Exod. iv. 22 ; James i. 18 ; Rev. xiv. 4 ; Luke x. 20 ; Phil. iv. 3 ; Rev. xiii. 8.

*Various Renderings.*—Revised Version only changes the word “written” for the word “enrolled.” But in margin, it gives, “To an innumerable company (innumerable hosts), the general assembly of angels, and the church of the first-born. Alford refers “innumerable company” to both “angels” and “church,” Others confine the description to the “angels.”

*Exegetical and Expository Notes.*—“First-born,” not to be understood baldly and literally. The same word is used of Christ as a figure. “Written,” better “enrolled.”

The Greeks inscribed the name of a new child on the roll of the citizens. . . . For distinction in the heavenly world, see Rev. iv. 4. Remember that the subject is the comparison and the contrast of the two dispensations.

*Dean Farrar.*—At the close of his arguments and exhortations, the writer condenses the results of his epistle into a climax of magnificent eloquence and force, in which he shows the transcendent beauty and supremacy of the New Covenant as compared with the terrors and imperfections of the Old. Verse 22. The true Sion is the antitype of all the promises with which the name had been connected. Sinai and Mount Sion are contrasted with each other in six particulars. Bengel makes a sevenfold antithesis. *Angels.*—Farrar does not discuss the question whether by angels here we are to understand redeemed spirits now active in spiritual spheres, or beings who never needed redemption, but are ministrants of redemption for men. Rhetorical speakers are apt to take great liberties with their language. And the word “angels” may very well be an inclusive term.

Verse 23. *Panēguris* means a “general festive assembly,” as in Song Sol. vi. 13. (LXX.). On this verse the

Dean says, "It has been questioned whether both clauses refer to Angels, and whether two classes of the Blessed are intended." He prefers to read, "But ye have come—to myriads—a Festal Assembly of Angels—and to the Church of the First-born—and to spirits of the Just who have been perfected."

"Church of the first-born."—This refers to the Church of living Christians, to whom the angels are ministering spirits, and whose names, though they are still living on earth, have been enrolled in the heavenly registers, as a kind of "first-fruits of His creatures," unto God and to the Lamb.

[Surely this misses the supreme aim of the epistle, which is to conciliate the Jews, and help them to realise that Christianity is but the blossoming, or fulfilling, of their system.—ED.]

*Dr. W. F. Moulton* quotes the following passage from *Delitzsch*:—"Under the new covenant, no longer is a tangible mountain the place of a Divine revelation. made from afar; but heaven is thrown open, and a new super-sensuous world, in which God is enthroned, is opened to admit us, opened through the Mediator of the New Covenant, accessible in virtue of His atoning blood."

Two interpretations of ver. 23 are possible. In the first rendering "angels" are the subject throughout. In the second, the "myriads" to whom we have come nigh are divided into two companies—the festal host of angels, and the Church of the first-born. By the latter interpretation, the "first-born" are sought amongst men; either those who are already inhabitants of the heavenly world, or men still living upon earth, though enrolled as citizens of heaven. *Moulton* prefers to regard the term, with *Dr. Lightfoot*, as "equivalent to heirs of the king-

dom, all faithful Christians being *ipso facto* 'first-born,' because all are kings."

On the whole, Moulton prefers the rendering which makes "angels" the subject throughout. "How fitly angels are spoken of as 'first-born' needs no explanation; they are the enrolled citizens of heaven, whose assemblies we are permitted to join.

*Webster and Wilkinson.*—Panēguris, means "high festival." The term is fitting when the writer would show forth the communion of the Church militant with the Church triumphant. "First-born"; the Church mystical, who are what they profess to be, and are entitled to a share in the privileges of elder sons. First-born was a title of the natural Israel.

*Dean Alford* renders—And to myriads, the festal host of angels, and the assembly of the first-born, which are written in heaven. Alford thinks the "Church of the first-born" is the Church below. "Written in heaven" gives their heavenly charter, the invisible side of their sonship and citizenship. The jubilant choir above, and the militant Church below are here united, ranged together.

*Critical Commentary.*—The city of God having been mentioned, the mention of its various citizens follows. This is the key to the passage. Who are they composing the heavenly, spiritual Zion? It includes those whose names are enrolled, but who are yet on earth as the Church below, absent from the assembly. Then urge to what a company we belong, and what persuasions this consideration should bring.

*Moses Stuart* renders—And to myriads, the joyful company of angels. He joins panēgurei with angels, and not with the Church. Reference is made to angels because of their connection with the Sinaitic revelation.



The mention of such an assembly of angels shows that the writer intends to describe the objects of the invisible world, as seen with the eye of faith ; not things palpable, not the objects of sense.

Ver. 22. To the assembly of the first-born enrolled in heaven. Ecclesia may mean any concourse of people; here, the sacred assembly of the upper world. "First-born" is here used figuratively. Among the Hebrews primogeniture conferred distinguished privileges. The whole tenor of the passage indicates reference only to the heavenly city and assembly: the older Church of patriarchs, &c.

*John Howe*, on ver. 23, Works, Vol. vi. p. 65.—These words are allusive. They are in the whole a figure, an allegory, which is expounded in Galatians iii. The text expresses what they were come and were tending to, the representation whereof has a double reference; intermediate—to the state and constitution of the Christian Church; and final—to the heavenly state; the former being both a *resemblance*, and some *degree*, of the latter.

"To the general assembly," the glorious *consensus* of all orders of blessed spirits. Allusion may be to the appointed times at which there was a resort from all parts to Jerusalem. And there may be allusion to the more general conventions of all the people at Athens upon solemn national occasions.

"The Church of the first-born written in heaven." They are said to be first-born, as the Church here meant consists only of those in whom the Divine life, or the holy image of God, hath place; they have all the privileges which did belong to the first-born—the inheritance, the principality, the priesthood; for all God's sons are also heirs. And they are all made

“kings and priests,” having all their crowns, which they often cast down before the supreme King; and their employment being perpetual oblation of praise, adoration, and all possible acknowledgments to Him—1. The perfection the spirits of the just finally arrive to in their future state. Perfection in the moral sense, contains a threefold gradation — (1.) At the lowest, sincerity. (2.) An eminent improvement, greater maturity in Divine knowledge, and all other Christian virtues. (3.) The consummate state of the Christian—“come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:” that state, to which all gifts given by our ascended, conquering, crowned Redeemer; the whole Gospel, the apostolate, the entire ministry, the whole frame and constitution of the Christian Church, all evangelical truths and institutions, with whatsoever illuminations and influences we can suppose superadded to all these, have ultimate and final reference. 2. In what sense sincere Christians may be said to be already come to the spirits of the just made perfect. It is to be understood—(1.) In a relative sense. They already belong to that general assembly. (2.) In a real sense; by a gradual, but true participation of the *primordia*—the first and most constituent principles and perfections of the heavenly state.

*Sermons in Library.*—Vers. 22–24, Adams’ Works, Vol. ii. p. 493. Vers. 24, 25, Waller’s “Everyday Life,” p. 44. Vers. 18–24, H. Stowell Brown’s “Manliness,” &c. p. 208. Ver. 22, W. Jay’s Short Discourses, Vol. iii. p. 246.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—This passage must be examined strictly in the light of what was at the time in the mind of the writer. God has had two Churches—the Jewish Church and the Christian Church.

For each there was an appropriate season. The difference between the two Churches is not one of essence, only one of form. The condition of membership in both Churches was the same. It was life in God, life coming through a new spiritual birth. The form and order in which that life found clothing and expression in the earlier days, was not essential to the life, only suitable for it in its then existent earthly relations. Form and order might pass away entirely, and the life in God would still remain. Form and order did pass away, but all who were alive unto God, through a Divine birth, under Judaism, are alive to-day.

The same is true of the Christian Church. The condition of membership is life in God, life coming through a new spiritual birth. The form and order in which that life finds clothing and expression, are no more essential than the earlier forms of Judaism were. All formal—doctrinal and ritual—Christianity, might drop entirely away, leaving all who are alive in God as truly alive as ever.

Then it is plain that God's Church is one, and all who are in the Church now are in living spiritual fellowship with all who have ever been in the Church. The spirits of just men who are *perfecting* are in fullest fellowship with the spirits of just men who are *perfected*. It is a general spiritual assembly.

"First-born" is not the same as "born again." First-born refers to the saints in Judaism, who were first quickened to the Divine-born. Eldest-born is the meaning. We are as younger sons, but no way other or separate from, the elder. We are, spiritually, the Church of God on earth, and this is the high fellowship in which we stand. The spiritual presence of the sanctified and perfected of the earlier dispensation is,

and should be more than it is, a constant and gracious power upon us.

The Jews who became Christians were troubled by the thought of their separation from the older religious system. They are assured that they were not separated from any of the underlying spirituality of it. There could be no separation so far as *it* was spiritual, and *they* are spiritual.

*Help* now, and *hope* for by-and-by, are in our present spiritual fellowship with all the saints of God, the "spirits of just men made perfect," who have come out of *all* the ages.

## XLI.

### MORAL MAN TRAINED BY BEING TRUSTED.

“And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.”—GENESIS ii. 15.

*Germ Thoughts.*—Man’s work, as man,—not as sinful man,—and the conditions under which he is to do his work, were wholly fixed and arranged by God, his Creator. From the very beginning of his career, God fixed upon his mind the exceeding dignity that lies in manual and mental work, in doing duty, in rendering obedience. God began the moral training of the moral being man, not by subjecting him to a test, but by awakening the sense of responsibility in having a trust committed to him. It is not usually presented with sufficient clearness and force, that God tested (in the fall) a man who had been put under responsibility, and had fully, consciously, accepted the responsibility. It was a man in *God’s* garden, not in his own garden, whose loyalty and obedience were tested. It will not be advisable to treat the Fall of Man in this sermon; this can be dealt with subsequently. This subject—the Fall—should be prepared for by the principles laid down in this sermon.

*Scripture References.*—For the provision of everything necessary in this garden, carefully examine Gen. ii. vers. 8–10. Compare Gen. xiii. 10; Isa. li. 3; Ezek. xxviii. 13; Joel ii. 3.

*Various Renderings.*—For “the man” the margin has “Adam.” The Revised Version keeps the reading “the man.”

*Dean Payne Smith.*—Reads, “and the Lord God took the man (the adam). The word translated ‘put’ is not the same as used in ver. 8. Here it literally means ‘He made him rest’ (or, as we should say, ‘He settled him in’). He gave it to him as his permanent and settled dwelling. “To dress it and to keep it.” The first word literally means “to work it;” for though a paradise, yet the garden had to be tilled and planted. Seeds must be sown, and cultivated plants kept in order; but all this really added to Adam’s happiness, because the *adâmâh*, as yet uncursed, responded willingly to the husbandman’s care. The other work “to keep it,” implies, however, some difficulty and danger. Though no unpropitious weather, nor blight, nor mildew spoiled the crop, yet apparently it had to be guarded against the incursion of wild animals and birds, and protected even against the violence of winds and the burning heat of the sun.

[*Note by Editor.*—There is surely no reason for assuming that any of the regular and ordinary Nature conditions were lacking in the first garden. If we are to understand the story, we must be willing to see that Adam’s nature conditions were in no way different from ours. All we need assume is a select place, where Nature conditions were favourable.]

The word “Paradise” is a Persian name for an enclosed park, such as the Kings of Persia used for hunting.

*Inglis.*—“Garden,” or enclosure, park. “Tree of life,” there is a curious suggestion that this was really the medicine tree. A special provision for the renewing of their life. The garden with its perfect beauty,



which yet required cultivation, is the reflection of man in his primitive innocence. As the mysterious possibilities of life and death are symbolised in the two trees, which may be said to foreshadow all the chequered history of man, in evil and in good, until the judgment-day.

"Work was an addition to man's pleasures. He who gave us these souls and bodies has given us something to work with; and He who gave us this earth hath made us something to work on" (*Matt. Henry*).

The design of the prohibition in ver. 17, was to train man, by means suited to his innocence and inexperience, in the first lesson of religion, which is, to trust God, and submit to His will even when it is most mysterious. For faith and obedience are principles as important in the world unfallen, as in a world fallen.

*F. W. Robertson*.—The object for which man is created is that he should, like all the rest, minister to the advance of all things. That is our position here; we are here to do the world's work.

*Speaker's Commentary*.—The trial was made whether in keeping God's commandments man would attain to good—*i.e.*, eternal life; or by breaking them, he should have evil—*i.e.*, eternal death. The lesson seems to be, that man should not seek to learn what is good and evil from himself, but from God only. That he should not set up an independent search for more knowledge than is fitting, throwing off the yoke of obedience, and constituting himself the judge of good and evil.

*Bishop Wordsworth*.—After a state of probation, man would probably have been translated to eternal bliss. Distinguish death from translation. The tree of life may have been designed to sustain and refresh the life infused into man at his creation. Adam's trial was whether he would be content with knowledge in God.

He was taught by Satan to desire knowledge apart from God.

*Lange* on ver. 8.—God here asserted to be the first Planter ; the founder of human *culture*, which at first is identical with the human *cultus*, or worship. The garden is the place of the human vocation, and of the human enjoyment in its undivided unity. "Dress it," for Nature, which grows wild or rank without the care of man, becomes ennobled under the human hand. Distinguish work, as it stands under the burden of vanity (Rom. viii. 20) from the paradisaical work, or activity. "Keep it," from wild beasts (*Knobel*) ; from the misuse of his own freedom ; or from the already existing power of evil (*Delitzsch*).

*Kitto*.—Adam had the employment assigned him of keeping and dressing the garden ; and this involves the knowledge of many operations, and of many properties of plants, which, although they may be in our day possessed by one man, are nevertheless the result of ages of experience. The commonest gardener that works for us, brings to his labour the progressive knowledge of many generations. If Adam had gone to work without previous instruction, or without being on the instant inspired (as was probably the case), with the knowledge of what was proper to be done in every new circumstance, he would soon have made sad ravages, even in the garden of Eden. To cultivate a garden implies the use of tools. These must either have been supplied to him, or he must have been endowed with the skill, and with the knowledge of materials, necessary to enable him to make them for his purpose.

*Hugh Macmillan, D.D.*—Left to himself and to Nature, man could never have risen from the savage state to that of a civilised being ; for his inherent

powers are not self-acting or self-evolving ; they require to be exercised and developed by a power beyond himself, and outside of Nature. There is no case on record of savages civilising themselves. Their life is as stereotyped as that of the brutes ; they are to this day what they were a thousand years ago ; and had the first man been created a savage he could never of himself have taken the first step of the upward course.

*G. Rawlinson.*—A remembrance of a past blissful condition seems to have been retained among a large number of people. The Greeks told of a “golden age,” when men lived the life of the gods, a life free from care, and without labour or sorrow. The earth brought forth spontaneously all things that were good in profuse abundance, and peace reigned. In the Zend-Avesta, the Iranic king lived in a secluded spot, where he and his people enjoyed uninterrupted happiness. In the Chinese books we read that, during the period of the first heaven, the whole creation enjoyed a state of happiness. The literature of the Hindoos tells of a “first age of the world when justice, in the form of a bull, kept herself firm on her four feet.” Virtue reigned, and no good which mortals possessed was mixed with badness. Traces of a similar belief are found among the Thibetans and Mongolians, the Cingalese and others. Even our own Teutonic ancestors had a glimpse of the truth.

*Scientific and Literary Bible Difficulties*, p. 494.—A moral being stands altogether higher in the scale of being than any existent or conceivable animal. But we need to see clearly what it is that makes the difference between a moral being and an animal. A moral being can apprehend his dependence upon a superior moral being ; can feel obligation, and knows that his choice must lie, not, as with the animal, between what is pleasant and what is painful, but between what is known to be the

will of God, and what is felt to be his own inclinations. But a being—a moral being—set under earthly conditions, must have the will of God presented in some positive commands, relating to some physical matter. His moral sense is awakened and educated through positive commands. A child can have no sense of right or wrong until he is made aware that he *may* do this, and he *may not* do that. The more simple the command is the better. There should be nothing to confuse issues. It should be the plainest question—will you please yourself, or will you obey the supreme will of your Creator? In the case of Adam, the test of the tree became a self-revelation of his moral nature, and that is figuratively presented as coming to “know good and evil.” Positive commands are essential to the moral testing of all child-conditions.

*Dean Plumpton.*—“Biblical Studies,” p. 56. In the glimpse which is given us into the mysteries of that perfection from which the human race has fallen, and to the restoration of which, in those who are willing to be restored, the whole plan and purpose of God is made subservient. We find in the garden of Eden, the “paradise of joy,” in which man was set to dress it and to keep it, the Tree of Life growing side by side with the Tree of Knowledge, the knowledge of good and evil. The latter, representing as it does the expansion of human thoughts and powers by the assertion of its self-will, by its experience of sensual pleasure, and by its knowledge of what were better left unknown, becomes, as it were, a sacrament of evil. The Tree of Life, of a life eternal and incorruptible, was the sign and sacrament not only of immortality, but of the blessedness which the vision of God brings to those who love Him, and are obedient to His will. . . . And so our first parents passed out of that paradise of God, the joy of a child-like innocence, into the rough, weary work of tilling the ground out of which were to grow thorns and thistles. Nature, and man’s work in Nature, interposed, as it were, between the soul and its Creator, and the slow work of a painful discipline began.

*Sermons in Library.*—On verses 8, 9, Bishop Horne’s Dis-

courses, Vol. i. pp. 37, 72. T. Bowdler, "Sermon on Privileges," Vol. ii. p. 18. W. Scott, M.A., "Parochial Sermons" (1845), Vol. i. p. 225. T. Newman, Sermons, Vol. i. p. 1.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—In introduction deal with two points. 1. The pictorial form of the early revelations, and the advantages attaching to that form. Its suggestiveness, and its universality of application. Compare the teaching value of our Lord's parables. Poetry, not history, preserves the early records of all nations. True of the history of Britain. Legends grow up around facts, but we need not think that fact is ever lost in legend. It stays for all who can read. A little poetical faculty, and above all, a little spiritual faculty, will enable us to discover the precious and universal truths that surely lie treasured in the early legends, and are best treasured by their pictorial and poetical forms. 2. The relation, in the mind of Moses, between these early records, and the foundations of his religious system. Especially their relation to the primary truth of the unity of God. To Moses it was the assertion of God's direct relation to all the movements on the created earth. At the heart of everything was God.

Underneath the pictorial form of the record we may find the assertion of three great primary facts:—1. God fixed man's location. God "took the man and put him." Eden was God's planting, not the man's. "He could not plead even a tenant-right to the garden, for he was not born on the premises, nor had anything but what he received; all boasting was hereby for ever excluded." The garden for the first man, prepared and adapted by God, does but represent, in miniature, the great garden of the earth, which God has also prepared and adapted for the race which Adam represented. Man is a dependent creature. He is set where God would have him be.

He is but a steward, set in God's garden with a trust. 2. God appointed man's work. He was "to till the ground, to dress it, and to keep it." These were to be his relations to the soil, with all its possibilities. Before the Fall there was the demand for man's *work*. This demand arose from the very conditions which God had arranged for the soil, and for the growth of vegetable life. Man's *work* was absolutely necessary to complete the creation, the circle of life and being ; his work is the finishing touch. Man's *work* is just as essential a part of God's plan for the earth as is the blossoming of the trees, or the inoculating of the seeds by the insects. Work is no curse ; sweating, anxious work is. 3. God arranged man's conditions. As a dependent being, man must be placed under conditions. In the conditions we find appointed in Eden, we have the picture of the constant and universal conditions under which man everywhere is set. One thing more especially needed to be tested and proved, when man was thus intrusted with the care of God's garden,—could he *keep* his position of dependence and service? or would he begin to say, "these things are *mine*, and I can do what I will with my own"?



## XLII.

### A FREE COURSE FOR THE WORD.

“ Pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified.”—2 THESS. iii. 1.

*Germ Thoughts.*—By the “word of the Lord” the apostle means, that message which had been entrusted to the apostles, and which they had the power of the Spirit to enable them to deliver. As our Lord put the matter, “Ye shall be witnesses unto Me.” As St. Peter put the matter in the great Pentecostal sermon, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.” A Divine power accompanies that word, that message, that witness. And it becomes an ever-enlarging and widening power, because whosoever receives it becomes a witness, and finds a new sphere. And so the Word is “glorified,” as the great, uplifting, regenerating, force of humanity. With the imagery of the “Games” in his mind, Paul wants all hindrances removed, from the course, so that the Gospel may “win its widening way.” What may be wisely brought out, is the enthusiastic confidence which Paul felt in the Gospel Word, and its life-giving forces. Those forces are, in part, the adaptation of the Gospel message to the moral and spiritual needs of humanity, so that if an awakened soul hears the message, he feels

that it meets his need. And in part the presence of the sealing, witnessing, working Holy Spirit. Perhaps, in just this, so much of our modern ministry fails. Men still preach Christ, but they seem to have lost the inspiring conviction that when they preach Christ, the "Lord is *present* to heal." If we do pray God to grant free course to His Word, there is one thing we ought to feel bound to do—stand out the way if we hinder. Take everything of ours out of the way, which might possibly hinder. But it should also be shown, that he who prays is always ready to aid in the accomplishment of that which he desires. What kind of aiding force can we, then, put forth?

*Scripture References.*—Eph. vi. 19; Col. iv. 3; 1 Thess. v. 25. For the figure in "run" (treké), see 1 Cor. ix. 24, 26; Gal. ii. 2; v. 7; Heb. xii. 1; 1 Pet. iv. 4; see especially 2 Tim. ii. 9, "the Word of God is not bound."

*Various Renderings.*—For "have free course," the Revised Version has "run"; as an alternative "may run" is given in the margin of Authorised Version.

*Exegetical and Expository Notes.*—*A. J. Mason, M.A.*  
—The practical portion is introduced in the same manner as in the first epistle. How much of a Christian teacher's power, increasing as time goes on, comes from the accumulation of intercession from his spiritual children! In all cases, Paul's prayer is for active help in his work of evangelising. "Free course" is, quite literally, "may run along." Speed and security are contained in this idea: no hesitation about the next turn, no anxious picking of the way, and no opposition from devils and bad men. Bengel compares Psalm cxlvii. 15. "Be glorified," the word does not mean

merely "obtain applause," "win distinction," as a successful runner: it always implies the recognition or acknowledgment of inherent admirable qualities (2 Thess. i. 12); and see the meaning of the term "glory" as applied to the apostle in 1 Thess. ii. 6. meaning recognition of our splendid position.

*Webster and Wilkinson.*—Run. Be unimpeded. Make progress rapidly and easily. May have free passage. The figure is expressive of vigorous action. It suggests self-originating, self-sustained action. The term "word" is personified as in Psalm cxlvii. 15. Paul probably resided at Corinth during the time that the Isthmian public games were being held in its neighbourhood (1 Cor. ix. 24-26). Paul's mind was filled with this imagery, and possibly the idea of the text is thence derived. "Be glorified," or gain the honours of victory.

*Crit. Com.*—Run—*i.e.*, spread rapidly, without a drag on the wheels of its course. The opposite is the Word of God being bound, as in 2 Tim. ii. 9.

*Conybeare and Howson.*—St. Paul makes frequent allusion to a topic which engrossed the interest, and called forth the utmost energies of the Greeks. The periodical games were to them a passion rather than an amusement: and the Apostle often uses language drawn from these celebrations, when he wishes to enforce the zeal and the patience, with which a Christian ought to strain after his heavenly reward. The imagery he employs is sometimes varied. In one instance, when he described the struggle of the spirit with the flesh, he seeks his illustration in the violent contest of the boxers (1 Cor. ix. 26). In another, when he would give a strong representation of the perils he had encountered at Ephesus, he speaks as one who had contended in

that ferocious sport which the Romans had introduced among the Greeks—the fighting of gladiators with wild beasts (1 Cor. xv. 32). But, usually, his reference is to the *foot-race* in the stadium, which, as it was the most ancient, continued to be the most esteemed, among the purely Greek athletic contests. If we compare the various passages where this language is used, we find the whole scene in the stadium brought vividly before us,—the herald, who summons the contending runners; the course, which rapidly diminishes in front of them, as their footsteps advance to the goal; the judge, who holds out the prize at the end of the course; the prize itself, a chaplet of fading leaves, which is compared with the strongest emphasis of contrast to the unfading glory with which the faithful Christian will be crowned,—the joy and exultation of the victor, which the Apostle applies to his own case, when he speaks of his converts as his “joy and crown,” the token of his victory, and the subject of his boasting (1 Cor. ix. 27; Phil. iii. 14; 2 Tim. iv. 8; 1 Cor. ix. 24; Phil. iv. 1; 1 Thess. ii. 19).

*Sermons in Library.*—On 2 Thess. iii. 1, C. Simeon, Works, xviii. 398. E. Cooper, “Practical Sermons,” Vol. iii. p. 312. Thomas Rogers, Lectures, Vol. ii. p. 196. On 2 Tim. ii. 9, Bp. Cresset, “Soc. Prop. Gospel,” 4°, 1753.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—It is remarkable how the imagery of the great Grecian games is worked into the epistles of St. Paul. Picture the foot-race in the stadium, which the apostle seems to have had in view when writing these words. 1. The Word of God is represented as though it were a living thing. The idea is “God’s spell.” In what sense is this true. Truth is alive. The living Spirit is yet with the truth. In what directions may we be enticed away from the

conviction of the living power of truth. Illus.—Ritualism and Millenarianism. Whence alone can come the deep conviction of the life of the Word? Only the consciousness of the high life which the living Word has quickened in us. The Word which was once clothed upon with the human body of Jesus, is now clothed upon with the spiritual body of the Holy Ghost. 2. The Word of the Lord is running a race towards a great end. Truth and Lies are running in a race for which the prize is, the world's love and allegiance. The truth of God is the Law and the Gospel. The lies of the devil began by implanting suspicion and mistrust of God. "Ye shall not surely die." 3. The Word of the Lord asks at our hands a free and unimpeded course. And our help as far as that may aid it. Note, the Word may be hindered by the additions of human opinion, and by the incompleteness, or unworthiness of the character of its professors. The Word may be helped by generous and devoted efforts in its behalf; and by believing, and fervent, and united prayer. Human mistakes and failings may, for a time, and in certain directions, hinder, but the Word of the Lord is sure to win the victory, and be glorified all along the line. This every one of us might be able to say,—The living Word *can* give life to every soul, for it has given life to *me*.

## XLIII.

### THE UNPARDONABLE.

“Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.”—MATTHEW xii. 32.

*Germ Thoughts.*—The mistake is usually made of turning this sentence into a general principle, and then applying it universally to such ideas of sin against the Holy Ghost as we are able to imagine. But, clearly, our Lord's words should be restricted to the particular case with which He deals. And our effort should be made to understand *that case*, and the strict limitations in which it is placed. If we seek for the general principles of Divine dealing in relation to sin, we come to apprehend that a sin may be unpardonable for two reasons. Not because God cannot pardon any and every sin, but because—1. Sin may put a man into such a state that it would do him no good to pardon him, and it would not be kind to the man to pardon him. And, because, 2, some sins cannot be wisely dealt with in the way of pardon. They are best left to work themselves out. They only reveal themselves in the misery they create. They are too *subtle* to be revealed by forgiveness. This is the case with what is known as the “sin against the Holy Ghost.” The man does not know when he commits it, or does not recognise it as sin. So, if you



were to offer forgiveness to him, he would think it forgiveness for nothing. You cannot forgive a man what he persists in declaring is not a sin. Such a sinner must "dree his weird." The gist of the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is, that it implies a condition of heart incompatible with faith and repentance, and these are absolutely necessary if Divine forgiveness is to be any good to a man. Imagine a forgiven, *hardened sinner*! What good is the forgiving to him? Imagine a forgiven Pharisee! He is too self-satisfied in his opinion that Jesus is an impostor, to care about, or think that he needs, any forgiveness.

*Scripture References.*—Mark iii. 22-30; Luke xii. 8-10; Heb. vi. 4; Acts vii. 51. Speaking against Son of Man, see John vii. 12-52; 1 Tim. i. 13. The keynote of our Lord's denunciation is what Pharisees *said*; see verse 24, and compare verses 36, 37—the importance of *words*.

*Various Renderings.*—"This world" is better "world-age." Revised Version gives in margin, "age," limiting our Lord's remark to the old Jewish, and to the new Christian, dispensations. There is no affirmation of unpardonableness through all eternity. What God can do beyond time-limitations is not in question.

*Exegetical and Expository Notes.*—A. Carr, M.A.—To speak against the Holy Ghost is to speak against the clear voice of the Holy Ghost within the heart—wilful sin against knowledge. Jesus, who saw the heart, knew that the Pharisees were insincere in the charge which they brought against Him. They were attributing to Satan what they knew to be the work of God. Their former attacks against the Son of God had excuse. For instance, they might have differed conscientiously on the question of Sabbath observance; now, they have no excuse. On verse 33, Carr says the meaning and con-

nection are :—" Be honest for once ; represent the tree as good, and its fruit good ; or, the tree as evil, and its fruit as evil ; either say that I am evil, and that My works are evil ; or, if you admit that My works are good, admit that I am good also, and not in league with Beelzebub."

*Dean Plumptre.*—In verse 31, omit *Holy* ; read, "against the Spirit." The Pharisees were warned against a sin to which they were drawing perilously near. To see a man delivered from the power of Satan unto God, to watch the work of the Spirit of God, and then to ascribe that work to the power of evil ; this was to be out of sympathy with goodness and mercy altogether. In such a character there was no opening for repentance, and, therefore, none for forgiveness. The capacity for goodness in any form was destroyed by this kind of antagonism. Towards this, the Pharisees were drifting.

For Jews, the term, "this age," is the time before Messiah's coming ; "the age to come," is the time after Messiah's coming.

*Olshausen.*—The opposition of the Pharisees reaches a climax in accusing Christ of a connection with the kingdom of the Evil One. Distinguish the general accusation—"He hath a devil"—from the specific accusation here—"ruled by the prince of the devils"—indicating peculiar wickedness of disposition. The Pharisees admitted the casting-out of Jewish exorcists. Christ compels them to assign a cause. (They found a good cause ; then, why did they find an evil one in the case of Christ ?)

Discard the idea that the sin was connected with local and temporary circumstances. Discard, also, the idea that it is any act or deed detached from the whole

moral condition of the individual sinning. It must always be considered as the fruit of a previous sinful course of life. There are three gradations in sin:—  
1. Against God the Father. 2. Against God the Son.  
3. Against God the Holy Ghost. We cannot hope to understand the passage, if “Holy Ghost” be understood only of the general power of God manifested in the miracles.

*Neander.*—Christ points out to the Pharisees the ground of their coming to utter such a self-refuting charge. It was because the disposition of their hearts ruled and swayed their decision. What aggravated their guilt was, that they suppressed the consciousness of God and truth, to Whose strivings in their minds their very accusation bore testimony. “You cannot believe that I work with the spirit of evil; you will not receive the revelation of the Holy Ghost that comes towards you.”

*Webster and Wilkinson.*—Importance of the occasion, and individuals addressed. The Pharisees had witnessed a grand miracle, and perversely attributed it to Satanic power. None can be guilty of this unpardonable sin in the same degree, because men are not now placed in the position of the Pharisees—they were eye-witnesses. Certainly, those have not committed it who are distressed with fear on that account. But all wilful and allowed sin bears some affinity to the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost (1 Sam. ii. 25).

*Ellicott.*—The essential characteristic of this sin appears to be an outward expression of an inward hatred of that which is recognised and felt to be Divine, and the irremissible nature of which depends, not on the refusal of grace, but on the now lost ability of fulfilling the conditions required by forgiveness.

*Critical Commentary.*—What then, is this sin? One thing is clear. Its unpardonableness cannot arise from anything in the nature of the sin itself; for that would be a naked contradiction to the emphatic declaration of verse 31, that all manner of sin is pardonable. Nor does it involve greater sanctity of the Spirit than the Son. It is a contrast between slandering the Son of Man in His veiled condition and unfinished work, which might be done ignorantly in unbelief; and slandering the same Blessed Person, after the blaze of glory which the Holy Ghost was soon to throw around His claims.

*Matt. Henry.*—This blasphemy *is* excepted, not for any defect of mercy in God, or merit in Christ, but because it inevitably leaves the sinner in infidelity and impenitency. As in the existing Jewish Church, there was no sacrifice of expiation for the soul that sinned presumptuously; so, neither under the dispensation of Gospel grace, which is often in Scripture called “the world to come,” shall there be any pardon for such as tread underfoot the blood of the covenant, and do despite to the Spirit of grace. There is no cure for sin that is so directly against the remedy.

*Dr. Pressensé*, p. 336.—So to misconstrue our Lord’s character and work, as to make Him the agent of devils, is to insult God in Him; and, actually, to blaspheme the Divine Spirit, who animates all His holy life. If there be an unpardonable sin, it surely is this; for to attribute to *devils* the very work of *salvation*, is to show an absolute incapacity for understanding and appreciating the blessing. The refusal of God’s pardon can take no more fearful form; it is the very consummation of perdition.

*Dean Farrar.*—Jesus showed them the gross absurdity of supposing that Satan could be his own enemy.

Using an irresistible *argumentum ad hominem*, He convicted them by an appeal to the exorcisms so freely, but almost ineffectually, professed by themselves and their pupils. And when He had thus showed that the power which He exercised, must be at once superior to Satan, and contrary to Satan, and must, therefore, be Spiritual and Divine, He warned them of the awful sinfulness and peril of this, their, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit of God, and how nearly it bordered on the verge of that sin, which alone, of all sins, could neither here, nor hereafter, be forgiven.

*H. Ward Beecher* cleverly gives the state of mind and malicious purpose of these Pharisees. The emissaries from Jerusalem and their confederates in Galilee were blind to all the excellences of Jesus. If He was to thrive outside of their party and raise up an influence antagonistic to it, then, the better He was, the more dangerous to them. How unscrupulous and malignant their conversation became is revealed by the epithets employed; He was a drunkard, He was a glutton, He was a companion of knaves and courtesans, He was a Sabbath-breaker, a blasphemer, a charlatan, a necromancer, an unclean fellow (Mark iii. 30). His power could not be gainsaid, but its moral significance might be blurred, nay, it might be made to witness against Him if they could persuade the people that the devil sent Him among them, and that under the guise of kindness He was really weaving infernal snares for their easy credulity! The reply of Jesus to this last aspersion was conclusive, if judged from their point of view.

Jesus brings home to the conspiring Pharisees the terrible charge of blasphemy. He expressly excludes the idea that this was done simply because they had

opposed *Him*. It was their own highest nature, in its state of Divine illumination, that they had deliberately violated. His works and His expositions had not failed ; there was among these men an hour of full conviction that this work and this doctrine was of God. But pride and malign selfishness rose up against the light. For the sake of sinister interests they dishonoured the noblest intuitions of their souls.

*Dr. Edersheim.*—The inquiry,—By what power Jesus did these works? the Pharisees met with the assertion that it was through that of Satan, or the chief of demons. They regarded Jesus as not only temporarily but permanently possessed by a demon, that is, as the constant vehicle of Satanic influence. Jesus, instead of being recognised as the Son of God, was regarded as an incarnation of Satan. It was the essential contrariety of Rabbiniism to the Gospel of the Christ that lay at the foundation of their conduct towards the person of Christ. We venture to assert that this accounts for the whole after-history up to the cross. And thus viewed, the history of Pharisaic opposition appears not only consistent but is, so to speak, morally accounted for. Their guilt lay in treating that as Satanic agency which was of the Holy Ghost.

“Bible Difficulties,” Second Series, p. 474. Our Lord addressed certain particular persons, and their *state of mind* made their sin to be unpardonable. They are a class by themselves. Their sin was not so much an act as a state of mind. There must be conditions of mind and feeling on which forgiveness must depend. It would not do a person any good to forgive him if he was in an impenitent, or an unforgiving, or a malicious state of mind. You cannot forgive such persons. You may feel forgiving towards them, but they cannot receive



the forgiveness. Their sinful state of mind is unpardonable.

The Holy Ghost works gracious persuasions in men's hearts, through the agency of Christ's life, and words, and deeds. But if a man fully resolves—sets his will up—against being persuaded, plainly it is not just Christ who is resisted, it is the Holy Ghost who is resisted; and men in such a state of mind and will simply cannot be pardoned, for pardoning is one of the gracious workings of that very Holy Ghost whom they are resisting. . . . The sin is only repeated now in those who determinedly resist the persuasions of the Holy Ghost working through the records left of Christ, and the preachings of the servants of Christ.

*Sermons in Library.*—On Matt. xii. 22–37, Sherlock, Vol. ii. p. 200. Guthrie's "Speaking to the Heart," p. 163. Bailhache's Sermons, p. 117. Norton's "King's Ferry Boat," p. 136. On Matt. iii. 22–30, Sherlock, Vol. iii. p. 409.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—Strength should first be given to apprehending, and showing clearly, who they were whom Christ directly addressed, and what was their state of mind. Make this point. They and their disciples cast out devils, and argued this was a proof of their goodness, and of the power of God witnessing to them and working through them. Jesus cast out devils. They admitted that. But the argument from the fact, which they applied to themselves, they would not apply to Jesus. *Why would they not?* The whole secret is explained in the answer to this question. *They were determined that they would not.* There is the sin against the Holy Ghost. In this light the application of our Lord's warning to present times can readily be shown. The Gospel is presented to us.

It carries its arguments and persuasions with it, and they ought to have their natural and proper results. But there is something more—the Spirit of God is in those arguments and persuasions, and is using them to accomplish His redeeming ends. Men may neglect these arguments and persuasions. For such neglect there is forgiveness. That God can pity and forgive. Men may resolutely resist ; they can be convinced, and yet refuse to be convinced ; they can feel the Spirit's power, and yet refuse to yield to the Spirit's power. Manifestly this state of mind and will cannot be forgiven—forgiveness is not the right way of dealing with it. The man who wilfully resists the conviction he feels is joined to idol self, and is best “let alone.” God can do something *better* for some men than *pardon* them.

## XLIV.

### THE SUPREME CONSTRAINT.

“For the love of Christ constraineth us.”—2 COR. v. 14.

*Germ Thoughts.*—A human life is not a series of actions, but a being acting. The supreme interest of life lies, not in the things which a man has done, but in the purposes and motives of his doing. Reading life in the light of what has been accomplished is *man's* work, and is the feature of ordinary biographies. Reading life in the light of its inspiring motives is work that only *God* can do efficiently. We may with confidence leave the appraisement of our lives in God's hands, because He will not misunderstand what seem to us to be failures, and He will read the motive that gave character to every endeavour, whether it succeeded or whether it failed. From one point of view the redemption of men may be regarded as this, providing them with an all-mastering, all-sanctifying motive. That motive St. Paul explains to us, and we can read, in His consecrated and devoted life, what that motive can accomplish. It is the supreme constraint.

*Scripture References.*—Rom. viii. 35 ; Eph. iii. 19.

*Various Renderings.*—Revised Version has “For the love of Christ constraineth us ; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died.” The Greek is *sunexei emas*.

*Exegetical and Expository Notes.*—Professor Lias.—

The love which Christ has not only displayed, but imparted. (So De Wette.) The word translated "constraint" means to "*coop up*," "keep within narrow bounds." See Luke xii. 50. It is also used by St. Luke of diseases (Luke iv. 38 ; Acts xxviii. 8), and of a multitude crowding (Luke viii. 45). Here it means "prevents us from doing anything but serve you for Christ's sake. In the second clause of the verse the Apostle's meaning would seem to be, not that all men were dead in trespasses and sins, and therefore needed one to die for them, but that the death of Christ, who had taken upon Himself to represent mankind before His Father's throne, was in a sense a death of all mankind. As F. W. Robertson says, "What Christ did *for* humanity was done *by* humanity.

*Dean Plumptre.*—The Greek, like the English, admits of two interpretations—Christ's love for us, or our love for Christ. St. Paul's uniform use of this and like phrases, however, elsewhere (Rom. v. 5 ; viii. 35 ; 1 Cor. xvi. 24 ; 2 Cor. xiii. 14), is decisive in favour of the former. It was the sense of the love that Christ had shown to him, and to all men, that was acting as a constraining power, directing every act of every spiritual state to the good of others, restraining him from every self-seeking purpose.

*Webster and Wilkinson.*—Here St. Paul gives the reason for his whole conduct, and states his principles. The "love of Christ" means our love towards Christ, as appears by the words "we thus judge," which refer to the action of our own minds. "Constraineth us." See on Acts xviii. 5. Constrained in spirit. Devoted himself to the work. Was entirely taken up with it, as something which affected, held, or possessed him. See Luke viii. 37 ; xxii. 63.

On the last clause of verse. "Therefore all died," in

His death. Not regarded as suffered imputatively by them, but regarded as the indication of what was due to them. His death for all men was the condemnation of all men, as well as the source and ground of their salvation, see Rom. viii. 22. This is introduced to show the immensity of our obligation to Him, and so the power of His constraint upon us. Some understand "died to sin," but this would make the inference a mere assumption, or unduly limit the word "all" to believers only.

*Crit. Com.*—Accounting for his being apparently beside himself with enthusiasm. The love of Christ toward us, seen in his death for us, which was the highest proof of it (Rom. v. 6–8), producing in turn love in us to Him, and not mere terror (ver. 11), "constraineth us," with irresistible power, limits to the one great object, to the exclusion of other considerations. The Greek word implies, to compress forcibly the energies into one channel.

"Therefore all died." His dying is just the same as if they all died ; and in their so dying, they died to sin itself, that they might live to God their Redeemer, whose henceforth they are.

*Dean Farrar.*—Suneixeto, in Acts xviii. 5, means "was being constrained by the word : " "was pressed in spirit." The meaning "was engrossed" is given, but less correctly.

*Paraphrase.*—They call us mad—well, if so, it is for God, or if we be sober-minded, it is for you. Our one constraining motive is Christ's love. Since He died for all, all in His death died to sin, and therefore the reason of His death was that we might not live to ourselves, but to him who died and rose again for us. From henceforth, we recognise no relation to Him which is not purely spiritual.

*Sermons in Library.*—Bossuet, Vol. xiv. p. 323. Archbishop Summer's "Christian Charity," p. 51. H. Alford, D.D., Sermons, Vol. i. p. 349. W. Sherlock's Sermons, Vol. ii. p. 381. T. Arnold, "Christ our Friend," Sermons, Vol. iii. p. 1.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—A man's life may be so unusual and peculiar as to need explanation. A man may not be able to explain what he has done, or what he is doing, save by unfolding the motive with which he is inspired. It may, however, be asked, whether a man can ever so perfectly know his own motive, as to be able to declare it to another person. Men are constantly acting on the inspiration of very mixed motives. And yet the deeper reading of every man's life would reveal some one master-motive, some one ruling motive. A Christian man is a man who has come into the power of one motive, and that a new motive, and the very highest and ennobling motive that can sway, and tone, and inspire a life. The Apostle is, in our text, showing his motive, in order to explain conduct which had been much misunderstood, and, we may say, reasonably misunderstood. Earnest and enthusiastic people, such as St. Paul, are always liable to be misrepresented. Fellowship with the Apostle will convince us of two things. 1. Love is a great constraint. Consciousness of a motive alone makes the act of a human being a *moral* act, and attaches to it the burden of responsibility. We are to be judged by God according to what we intended, as this has found expression in what we have done. Why is love the superior motive power in man. Because it is heart-power, and bears relation to the most vital force in us. Many waters cannot quench love. Hindrances and difficulties do but inflame love. It delights in disabilities. It enjoys triumphing over opposition. It nourishes itself on



endurance. It is necessary to distinguish between the love we have for another, and the love that other may have for us. The love we have for another is always in danger of becoming passion. And then it may not be a constraint to the things that are good. The love of another for us, recognised, felt, and responded to, by us, is never anything but a constraint to goodness. It is the surprise that saves a man, when he comes to say of the Lord Jesus, "*He loved me, and gave Himself for me.*" Being loved becomes such a holy constraint, because it puts us under a pressure that presses the best possible out of us. It works in this way. We idealise him who loves us. And our ideals exert the very strongest power of persuasion and constraint on us. We not only idealise those who love us, we also idealise what they wish us to do. 2. In human lives the love of Christ is the supreme constraint. St. Paul was not likely to find his satisfaction in what he felt for Christ. His life was lived in the persuasion that *Christ loved him*. Our love to Christ is never more than responsive love. It comes second. It is "love-won love." We ought only to boast about that love which has won ours. To St. Paul the love of Christ was always a present acting constraint. The living Lord Jesus wrapt him about with His love every day. He felt it always moving him to goodness. The love of Christ may be learned in the shadow of the cross; but we have to find out, through personal experience, that it is a present power on us. The constraining power ought to be felt by us every day, and in every sphere,—home, business, friendship, society. It should ennoble every endeavour. And we ought to feel under constraint to make Him happy, who thus loves us with a love "beyond all measure of so much."

## XLV.

### HELPLESS LAW.

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh."—ROMANS viii. 3.

*Germ Thoughts.*—"Law" represents "what I know I ought." "Flesh" represents "what I feel I like." Given man reaching the ideal of his creation, and he would be able to fulfil law, and always do what he knew he "ought to do." Given man deteriorated by ages of doing "what he liked," and the power of liking, the whole force of desires, and fleshly lusts and passions, will have grown so overwhelmingly strong, that it will have become impossible to obey the law, impossible, that is, to do always and perfectly what he knows he ought. It was precisely this inability to perform duty, through the power of dominating fleshliness, that St. Paul recognised so fully, and felt so keenly. To him the redemption of humanity is by influx of power into the human will and resolve, with the consequent delivery from the masterful domination of the "flesh," and liberty, with ability, for a man to do what he knows that he ought. St. Paul saw, that this influx of liberating and conquering power comes to us by, and in, that vital connection with the Lord Jesus Christ, which is now made the sublime human possibility.

The use of the term, "the law," by St. Paul, especially

when writing to the Romans, whose national genius was legal, needs very precise and careful treatment. What he means is the regulation of the conduct of a moral being by formal rules and directions, given by an authority which he is bound to recognise. The Jewish ceremonial system is not this, but it illustrates this. Given a moral being, in the environment of a fleshly nature and relations, and St. Paul says, those formal laws and rules never did, and never could, make righteousness. There must be some fleshly force which will keep that fleshly environment within proper bounds, some force coming to the moral being, from outside, which will give him "power to perform." If the experiment were tried over and over again a thousand times, the result would be the same. Formal rules cannot, of themselves, make a moral being who is placed in a fleshly environment, always do right. Into the moral being must come a Divine force, then he will use aright the flesh, and then he will be able to keep the rules.

The key-note of St. Paul's soteriology may be thus stated. In Christ Jesus alone—that is, with the *life* that Jesus gives—alone can any biassed and deteriorated moral being, now living, gain "power to perform." The Lord Jesus came to *save*—that is, in Him we "have *life*," and have it "more abundantly," and unto all sufficiency to meet our needs.

*Scripture References.*—Acts xiii. 39; Rom. iii. 20; 2 Cor. v. 21; Gal. iii. 13; Heb. vii. 18, 19; x. 1, 2, 10, 14.

*Various Renderings.*—For "in that," read "because"; "sinful flesh," lit., "flesh of sin;" "for sin," may be either, "on account of," or "for a sin-offering;" or, as marg., "by a sacrifice for sin." Revised Version gives, "And as an offering for sin," in italics, intimating that the words are added to make sense, but have no precise equivalent in the original.

*Exegetical and Expository Notes.*—Howard Hinton.—

What law could not do, was to provide for the combined justification and sanctification of the sinner; a purpose for which it was necessarily powerless through human iniquity. This God had effected, since by sending His own Son, in the nature of sinful man and for sin, He “punished sin in the flesh.” There can be no doubt the Apostle here refers to the one sacrifice of Christ, in expiation for human guilt; and when he says God thus “punished sin in the flesh,” he means that God thus carried out in human nature the sentence of the law against sin.

*Critical Commentary.*—The law’s inability to free us from the dominion of sin the apostle has here in view. The law could irritate our sinful nature into more virulent action, but it could not secure its own fulfilment. “Weak through the flesh;” having to address itself to us through a corrupt nature, too strong to be influenced by mere commands and threatenings “for sin;” lit., about sin; on the business of sin. The design is not to speak of Christ’s mission to atone for sin, but, in virtue of that atonement, to destroy its dominion, and extirpate it altogether from believers. “Condemned sin”—i.e., condemned it to lose its power over men, who, through the Cross, shall be emancipated into the liberty and power to be holy. “After the spirit;” our own mind, as renewed and actuated by the Holy Ghost.

*Webster and Wilkinson.*—The apostle’s meaning is—“The law was efficient only for condemnation; sinful human nature made it incapable of affording justification; but God in condemning sin provided both justification and sanctification; justification by the substitution of the surety in place of the guilty, and by his

subjection to the punishment due to sins. Sanctification in that identity of nature with the surety and representative, which gives the redeemed participation in the spiritual effect of His death unto sin. Here is a combination of the truths separately expressed in 2 Cor. v. 21, and Romans vi. 6.

*Conybeare and Howson.*—With the help of Christ's spirit this sinful, earthly nature is vanquished in the Christian, and he is enabled to live, not according to the carnal part of his nature (*sarx*), but according to the spiritual part. "Condemned," lit., put it to rebuke, worsted it, "in the flesh"—that is to say, in the very seat of its power.

The contrast between the victory thus obtained by the spirit, with the previous subjection of the soul to the flesh, is thus beautifully described by Tertullian: "When the soul is wedded to the spirit the flesh follows — like the handmaid who follows her wedded mistress to her husband's home—being thenceforward no longer the servant of the soul, but of the spirit."

*Barnes.*—In Chapter vii. it was shown that the law was incapable of producing sanctification, or peace of mind. Both before and after regeneration it was incapable of producing peace or holiness. The application of law only excites, only produces conflict. The Gospel gives inward life, and delivers from condemnation, and produces the spirit of adoption. Note the precise uses of the word—law—in these chapters.

"Through the flesh;" the fault was not in the law, which was good, but it was owing to the strength of the natural passions, and the sinfulness of the unrenewed heart. "Likeness of sinful flesh;" He so far resembled sinful flesh, that He partook of flesh, or the nature of man, but without any of its sinful propensities or

desires. "For sin;" His being given had respect to sin. "Condemned sin"—1. The fact that He was given for it, and died on its account, was a condemnation of it. If sin had been approved by God, He would not have made an atonement to secure its destruction. 2. The word "condemn" may be used in the sense of destroying, overcoming, or subduing. The sacrifice of Christ has weakened the power of sin and destroyed its influence, and will finally annihilate its existence in all who are saved by that death.

*Matthew Henry.*—Law could neither justify nor sanctify, neither free us from the guilt nor from the power of sin, having not the promises either of pardon or of grace. The weakness was through the flesh, through the corruption of human nature, by which we become incapable either of being justified, or sanctified, by the law. We had become unable to keep the law, and in case of failure the law made no provision. In Christ we receive pardon and a new nature, and are freed from both the guilt and power of sin (see Heb. x. 1-10). For all who are Christ's the damning, domineering power of sin is taken away.

*James Stalker, D.D.*—(These notes will be found peculiarly suggestive and helpful.) The truth is, Gentiles and Jews had both failed for the same reason. Trace these two streams of human life back to their sources, and you come at last to a point where they are not two streams but one; and, before the bifurcation took place, something had happened which predetermined the failure of both. In Adam all fell, and from him all, both Gentiles and Jews, inherited a nature too weak for the arduous attainment of righteousness; human nature is carnal now, not spiritual, and therefore unequal to this supreme spiritual achievement. The



law could not alter this ; it had no creative power to make the carnal spiritual. On the contrary, it aggravated the evil. It actually multiplied offences, for its clear and full description of sins, which would have been an incomparable guide to a sound nature, turned into temptation for a morbid one. The very knowledge of sin tempts to its commission ; the very command not to do anything is a reason to a diseased nature for doing it. This was the effect of the law ; it multiplied and aggravated transgressions. And this was God's intention. Not that He was the author of sin ; but, like a skilful physician, who has sometimes to use appliances to bring a sore to a head before he heals it, he allowed the heathen to go their own way, and gave the Jews the law, that the sin of human nature might exhibit all its inherent qualities, before he intervened to heal it. The healing, however, was His real purpose all the time ; He concluded all under sin, that He might have mercy upon all. Man's extremity was God's opportunity. The law had never, in His intention, been a way of salvation.

*T. Chalmers, D.D.*—It is no reflection on the penmanship of a beautiful writer that he can give no adequate specimen of his art on the coarse and absorbent paper which will take in no fair impression of the character that he traces upon its surface. Nor is it any reflection on the power of an accomplished artist that he can raise no monument thereof from the stone which crumbles at every touch, and so is incapable of being moulded into the exquisite form of his own faultless and finished idea. And so of the law, when it attempts to realise a portrait of moral excellence on the groundwork of our nature. It is because of the groundwork, and not of the law, that the attempt has failed ; and so, when

he tells us of what the law could not do, lest we should be left to imagine that this was from any want of force or capacity in the law, he adds, "in that it was weak through the flesh."

*Professor Agar Beet.* — The voice of Sinai was powerless to save, because our flesh was too weak to throw off the bondage of sin. Just as a rope is powerless to save a drowning man who has not strength to grasp it. Whereas even such might be saved by the living arms of a strong man.

*John H. Godwin, D.D.*—Here the reference must be to the Jewish law, the inefficacy of which has been shown in the preceding section. It could not be supposed by any that the law of sin and death would do that which Christ is now declared to have done; but this was erroneously expected from the law of Moses.

*W. Sanday, D.D.*—How was I freed? Thus. Precisely on that very point where the law of Moses showed its impotence—viz., in the attempt to get rid of sin, which it failed to do, because of the counteracting influence of the flesh. Precisely on this very point God interposed by sending His Son in a body of flesh similar to that in which sin resides, and as an offering to expiate human sin, and so dethroned and got rid of sin in the flesh which He had assumed. The flesh, the scene of its former triumphs, became now the scene of its defeat and expulsion.

There was one constant impediment in the way of the success of the law, that it had to be carried out by human agents, beset by human frailty, a frailty naturally consequent upon that physical organisation with which man is endowed. Temptation and sin have their roots in the physical parts of our nature, and they were too strong for the purely moral influence of the law.

*Sermons in Library.*—On 2 Cor. v. 21, Romaine's Works, Vol. iii. p. 155. On text, St. Augustine, Sermons, "Lib. of Fathers," Vol. xx. p. 716. C. Simeon's Works, xv. p. 191. H. Marriot's Sermons, Vol. ii. p. 59.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—It is important to remember that this epistle was written to Roman Christians, some of whom were Jewish converts and some were Gentile. The skill of St. Paul's letter is seen in his dealing with law so as to meet the concrete notions of the Jew, and the abstract notions of the Roman. When law was mentioned, a Jew understood the Mosaic system of rules for the regulation of all a man's conduct and relations, both towards God and his fellow-men. When law was mentioned, a Roman understood the impression of an outside authority on the ordering of society. If the Roman were a philosopher, he would have an abstract idea, and conceive of law as supreme authority regulating inferiors. But both Jew and Gentile saw law as formal and precise rules covering all the acts and associations of human life. Then what St. Paul brings out is this—Formal rules never yet brought righteousness to moral beings, and they never can. We can only conceive of moral beings as placed in some fleshly environment. Then two cases are conceivable. The fleshly may retain its original purity. But in that case no formal rules would be necessary, for there would be no possibility of enticement to evil, which could need regulating and restraining. Or the fleshly may become biassed and deteriorated. In that case formal laws and rules would be helpless, because they can only *direct*, they cannot *inspire*, and what the moral being would need, in its effort to gain righteousness, would be, moral force, triumphing moral force.

Then work out that the salvation Christ provides is

*moral* force, "power to perform." This does not supersede law, but does what law could not do, and was never intended to do. What Christ's redemption has to deal with is the "weakness of the flesh," which prevents law from working out righteousness. Then the preacher should think out carefully how Christ's coming *in the flesh*, and triumphing in it, plucked the power of "weak flesh" for ever away.

## XLVI.

### CHRIST'S MAGNIFIER.

"As always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death."—PHILIPPIANS i. 20.

*Germ Thoughts.*—Here is a noble man's self-revelation. He permits us to read his heart ; to know the settled principle which controlled him, and the supreme motive that inspired him. On another occasion, St. Paul explained the enthusiasm which drew public attention, and caused surprise, by saying, "The love of Christ constraineth us." Life lived worthily brings an absorbing, all-constraining love to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the man's supreme aim comes to be, to magnify, exalt, honour Christ. Such a man as St. Paul shows us the human possibility of absolutely and entirely *losing self*, in the passionate, absorbing love of another, when that other is worthy of such absorbing love. Careful distinction should be made between the love of God in Christ, and any form of human love, in which there must be a *sensual* element. So long as the sensual element remains, there is no entire triumph over self. But there is no sensual element in our love to Christ, and so the Christ-love can be a complete triumph over self. Paul can magnify *Christ*, not *self*.

As Christ put self aside to magnify the Father, so St. Paul put self aside in order to magnify Christ.

There are only two possibilities of life for any man. There is life for self. There is life for another. The tone and character of the life will depend on who *that other* is.

*Scripture References.*—Rom. v. 6; Eph. vi. 19, 20. For Scripture use of the idea of "shame," see Ps. xxv. 3; Zech. ix. 5; Rom. v. 5; ix. 33; 2 Tim. i. 12.

*Exegetical Notes* on vers. 20, 21.—*Ellicott*.—Ver. 20. *Oti*, may be either relational, "that," or argumentative "because." *Oudeni*, may be either neuter, or masculine in reference to the preachers of the Gospel. What the apostle hopes and expects is, that he shall not be brought to a state of shame, that he shall not fail in the highest duties and aims of his life. *Pasé*, not qualitative, but quantitative; "every form and manifestation of boldness." Exact opposition to *oudeni*. *En parrhesia*, not merely "in joyfulness," but as the contrast and context imply, *in fiducia*—boldness of speech and action (Eph. vi. 19). *Shall be magnified in my body*; not "in me," but in accordance with the studiously passive aspect given to the whole declaration—"in my body." My body shall be, as it were, the theatre on which Christ's glory shall be displayed. Two alternatives are suggested by the reference to "my body." Whether that body be preserved alive as an earthly instrument of my Master's glory, or be given up to martyrdom for His name's sake.

Ver. 21. "In my case." Life, in my realisation of it. Living consists only in union with Christ, and devotion to Him. My whole being and activities are His (comp. Gal. ii. 20). Death is gain, as I shall thus enjoy a still nearer and more blessed union with my Lord. (Should not the idea of service to Christ be associated with death—martyr death—as well as with life? "To die is



gain, because I shall witness to my Lord in my dying for Him, and after death I shall have even higher opportunity of serving Him.”—*Query by ED.*)

The Apostle in ver. 21, speaks of life and death from a strictly personal point of view. In this aspect death was gain. The thought, however, of his official labours reminds him that his life bears blessing and fruitfulness to others.

*Expository Notes.*—*Alfred Barry, D.D.*—“Ashamed.” The phrase is elsewhere used by St. Paul with especial reference to the shame which comes from hopes disappointed, and professions unfulfilled. He trusts that, in the hour of trial, the confidence which he has felt and professed, of being “able to do all things through Christ who strengtheneth him,” may not come to shameful failure, but that he may “magnify Christ in all boldness of speech.” There is a subtle touch of true Christian feeling in the fact that, when he speaks of the chance of failure, he uses the first person: “I shall be ashamed;” but when of triumph, it is “Christ shall be magnified in me.” If he fails, it must be through his own fault; if he triumphs, it will be through his Master’s strength.

“In my body.” The phrase is, no doubt, suggested mainly by the idea of death—the death of a martyr in bodily torture or shame. There is the same connection of idea in 2 Cor. iv. 10. But while the word “flesh” is used in the New Testament in a bad sense, the “body” is always regarded as that in which we may glorify God (1 Cor. vi. 20) by word and deed. It is not merely a vesture of the soul, but a part of the true man (1 Thess. v. 23); having membership of Christ, and being the temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. vi. 15–19).

In this passage, St. Paul’s whole idea is of Christ in

him ; hence his body is spoken of as simply the tabernacle of the indwelling presence of Christ, and devoted only to "magnifying" Him.

*H. C. G. Moule, M.A.*—"In my body." The body is the Spirit's vehicle and implement in action upon others. The impression made on others, the "magnification" of Christ in the view of others, "whether by means of life or of death," would have to be effected through *bodily* doing or suffering.

The Apostle is thinking (in verse 21), not of the sources of life, but the experiences and interests of living. Living is, for him, so full of Christ—so pre-occupied with Him, and for Him—that Christ sums it up.

*Conybeare and Howson.*—Explain the special circumstances which led St. Paul to anticipate an unfavourable issue to his approaching trial. Prisoners in St. Paul's position, were under the charge of the Prætorian Præfect ; and in this year had occurred the death of the virtuous Burrus, under whose authority St. Paul's imprisonment had been so unusually mild. His successor, Tigellinus, was already notorious for that energetic wickedness, which has made his name proverbial. About this time Nero married the infamous Poppæa, who had become a proselyte to Judaism. We know, from Josephus, that she exerted her influence over Nero in favour of the Jews, and that she patronised their emissaries at Rome ; and, assuredly, no scruples of humanity would prevent her from seconding their demand for the punishment of their most detested antagonist.

These changed circumstances fully account for the anticipations of an unfavourable issue to his trial, which we shall find St. Paul now expressing, and which

contrast remarkably with the confident expectation of release entertained by him when he wrote the letter to Philemon.

*Dean Farrar.*—"For I know that this trouble will turn to salvation by means of your prayer, and the rich outpouring of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, in accordance with my earnest desire and hope, that, with all outspokenness, as always, so now"—he was going to say—"I may magnify Christ;" but with his usual sensitive shrinking from any exaltation of himself, he substitutes the third person, and says, "So now, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death."

*Critical Commentary.*—"Earnest expectation." The Greek expresses, "Expectation with uplifted head, and outstretched neck." See Rom. viii. 19. *Tittmann* says that, in both places, it implied not mere expectation, but the anxious desire of an anticipated prosperous issue in afflictive circumstances.

*J. A. James*, Works, Vol. iii. p. 221.—The specific idea the Apostle had in his thoughts, when he penned this passage, was, that Christ was the end, scope, object of his whole existence. As a man he acted; as a Christian he lived; and as a minister he preached for Christ. He was willing even to lose his personality, that it might be swallowed up in Christ.

*Sermons in Library.*—Masillon, J. B., Sermons, Vol. viii. p. 1. C. Simeon, Works, Vol. xviii. 23.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—Introduce by recalling the associations of St. Paul with the women at Philippi, as explaining the unusually tender, personal, and confidential tone of this Epistle. What a strange power St. Paul has on all our hearts! A different kind of power to that of St. John. St. John is too saintly.

St. Paul is so intensely human and brotherly. Here, St. Paul lets us read his heart; see what is his settled resolve; what is the real spring, and motive, and inspiration, of all his life, all his activities of doing, and all his passivities of bearing and of suffering. "Christ shall be magnified in my body." 1. *How much St. Paul felt Christ was to him.* Recall the way in which he won Christ. He heard Him speak from the heavenly places. From that hour Christ was everything to him. But it is important to notice that here St. Paul calls Him Christ, not Jesus. That is no mere accident of speech. It represents just the change of thought which usually attends on advancing Christian life. Our first apprehension, partly adapted to our awakening sense of sin and danger, is of Jesus, our *Saviour*—our Saviour from sin. But as we grow in grace, and find out how much more than a Saviour from sin the Lord Jesus becomes to us, we get to call Him *Christ*, and to apprehend Him as "Christ our Life." We, in a way, make an ideal of the "Man, Christ Jesus," and find that He carries to us God; He brings to us the sense of God. The name "Jesus" keeps for us the sense of His brotherhood; the name "Christ" brings to us His Deity. It is not before the Crucified Jesus, but before the Risen Christ, that Thomas says, "My Lord and my God." 2. *How much St. Paul purposed to be for Christ.* He intended to be, he resolved to be, His magnifier. He was determined so to live, and so to labour, that everybody who came into contact with him, and everybody who was, in any way, influenced by his work, should think nobler and better things concerning Christ. His lips should praise Him. His life should praise Him. His works should praise Him. If all the world were silent, St. Paul was determined that, as long as he lived, Christ should have *one magnifier*. But he

wants to have Christ magnified "in his body." Not just in his feelings or sentiments. It is "in my *body*," this actual agent through which I—a Spiritual Being—come into a thousand-fold relations with a material world of men and things. And it is "*my body* ;" just this body that I have, with all its frailties and feeblenesses. Life and death concern our bodily organisation. I am not sure that we need keep precisely to the thought which St. Paul had about "life" and "death." To him, "life" represented opportunities for public ministry and service. And "death" represented the martyr's public testimony for Christ. He loved his ministry, and it was hard to think of giving it up. He anticipated martyrdom. It might be the end of his present imprisonment. But he meant to magnify Christ in martyrdom, whether it came as devouring flame, shameful cross, fangs of ferocious beasts, or the headsman's sword.

But we must get some meaning for ourselves out of the terms "life" and "death." They may well represent the two sides of the universal human, the universal Christian, experience. The word "life" may stand for the energetic, active, successful side of our human experience. The word "death" may stand for the hindered, disabled, persecuted, resultless side of our human experience. These two, in very varying proportions, make up every career. Taken in these senses, we may well want Christ magnified in *our* life and death, in our service, and in our silence, in the times when we can do, and in the times when we can only "stand and wait."

*The Legend of St. Paul's Martyrdom.*—Accompanied by the centurion and the soldiers who were to see him executed he left Rome by the gate now called by his name. For nearly three miles the sad procession walked, and doubtless the dregs of the populace, who always

delight in a scene of horror, gathered round them. About three miles from Rome, not far from the Ostian Road, is a green and level spot, with low hills around it, known anciently as *Aquæ Salviæ*, and now as *Tre Fontane*. There the word of command to halt was given, the prisoner knelt down, the sword flashed, and the life of the greatest of the Apostles was shorn away.—*Dean Farrar*.

Through the dust and tumult of that busy throng the small troop of soldiers threaded their way silently under the bright skies of an Italian midsummer. They were marching, though they knew it not, in a procession more truly triumphal than any they had ever followed, in the train of general or emperor, along the Sacred Way. Their prisoner, now at last and for ever delivered from his captivity, rejoiced to follow his Lord "without the gate."

Weeping friends took up his corpse and carried it for burial to those subterranean labyrinths, where, through many ages of oppression, the persecuted Church found refuge for the living and sepulchres for the dead (*Conybeare*).



## XLVII.

### A SOUL-SEARCHING QUESTION.

“I know it is so of a truth ; but how should man be just with God?”—  
JOB ix. 2.

*Germ Thoughts.*—Sooner or later a man's standing before God becomes the man's supreme anxiety. If a man does not know God, has no spiritual appreciation of a Supreme Being who is the absolute standard of character and source of authority, he may very well have no mental or moral anxieties. But then the absence of such anxieties shows him to be still in the lower animal plane. He cannot have risen into the conscious dignity of a moral being. Let a man know God, and the distance between God and himself is at once revealed to him. And his first consciousness is of the impossibility of so standing the test of God as to be “just with Him.” What Job here expresses is not the evangelical inquiry, “In what way can a man who is consciously guilty be made to be, or to appear to be, just before God?” His thought is a much more general one, it is one that oppresses every serious mind. How can the righteousness of any merely dependent creature be brought into any sort of comparison with the righteousness of the Uncreated One? Man is but a limited, weak, dependent creature. If he could become just, if he could do any right thing within his limitations, it would in no

sense compare with the claims or the righteousness of God. It must be in the infinite condescension of God that He regards any act of His creature man as being just, or righteous. We cannot claim justice answering to God's justice. We must seek mercy, as those who, at their best, are imperfect and weak.

*Scripture References.*—Psalm cxliii. 2 ; Rom. iii. 20.

*Various Renderings.*—For “just with God” read “just before God.” Revised Version, marg., reads, instead of “but how” “for how.”

*Exegetical and Expository Notes.*—*A. B. Davidson, D.D.*—Subject of chapter, God's might and the terror of His majesty will prevent man from establishing his innocence in his plea with God.

Starting with the question, How can man substantiate his innocence in the face of God's overpowering might? Job passes on to a delineation of this Divine power, which he conceives as a terrible, irresistible force, which moves mountains, &c., and whose workings are beyond the compass of the human mind to grasp.

Ver. 2.—It is not quite easy to see what form of the maxim of the friends it is to which Job gives his sneering assent in this verse, when he says, “To be sure I know that it was.” In ver. 10 he quotes words from Eliphaz (chap. v. 9) verbatim, and he may refer to the form in which this speaker put forward the principal common to them all, Shall man be righteous before God? (chap. iv. 17). In this case the second member of the verse merely explains the words, “that it is so.”

“Of a truth I know that it is so ;  
How shall man be righteous with God?”

Job, however, gives a different turn to the words, meaning by them, How shall man substantiate his

righteousness, and make it to appear, when he has to maintain it in the face of the overpowering might of God? (ver. 3).

Or Job may attach his reply to Bildad's question, Will God pervert right? (chap. viii. 3). To which he replies, Of course, but how shall man have right with God? God's power makes right. Job does not quibble with words. He speaks from the point of view of his own circumstances, and the construction which he puts on them. His afflictions were proof that God held him guilty, while his own conscience declared his innocence. But he was helpless against God's judgment of him. In the view of his friends and all men, and even himself, his afflictions were God's verdict against him. And his answer is, that man must be guilty before God, because he cannot contend with an omnipotent power resolved to hold him guilty.

*Critical Commentary.*—Paraphrase. I know that it is so, that God does not pervert justice. But even though I be sure of being in the right, how can a mere man assert his right—be just—with God? The Gospel answer is found in Rom. iii. 26. The idea producing difficulty is awe of the Divine majesty.

*Delitzsch.*—What God does is always right, because God does it; how could man maintain that he is right in opposition to God. If God should be willing to enter into controversy with man he would not be able to give him information on one of a thousand subjects that might be brought into discussion: he would be so confounded, so disarmed, by reason of the infinite distance of the feeble creature from his Creator.

*Matthew Henry.*—Some understand this as a passionate complaint of God's strictness and severity, that He is a God whom there is no dealing with, and it cannot

be denied that in the chapter there are some peevish expressions. Prefer to take verse as a pious expression of man's sinfulness, and Job's own in particular, that if God should deal with any of us according to the desert of our iniquities, we should certainly be undone.

*Stanley Leathes, D.D.*—Job's reply to Bildad differs from that to Eliphaz, inasmuch as he exposes the hollowness of Bildad's position by sapping its foundation. Admitting the general propriety of all he has said, he confronts him with the anterior question, "How can weak man be just with God?" And this is the question, if fairly dealt with, which must always confound shallow generalisers like Bildad.

*Barnes.*—Job never meant, in indicating his own innocence, to maintain that he was absolutely free from sin. He proceeds to argue that God is an absolute sovereign; that He distributes favours and judgments in accordance with His own inscrutable will; that men ought not to presume to sit in judgment on the doings of the Almighty; and that, even if he had the fullest conviction of his own innocence, he would not presume to enter into an argument with Him, but would make supplication to Him. "How shall man be just before God?" The meaning is, that he could not be regarded as perfectly holy in the sight of God; or, that so holy and pure a being as God must see that man was a sinner, and regard him as such. The question here asked is, in itself, the most important ever propounded by man, "How shall sinful man be regarded and treated as righteous by his Maker?" This has been the great inquiry which has always been before the human mind.

*Ewald.*—Job must grant what was correct in the words of Bildad and Eliphaz—the truth of the Divine omnipotence, and of human weakness before God. But that

bald, cold way of regarding the antithesis of Divine omnipotence and human weakness, admits, in fact, of exactly the opposite inference, namely, that God, precisely as the Almighty One, cannot afflict a weak man to the very uttermost, while the man is unable in any effective way to resist.

*George Wagner.*—He who has made and redeemed man can alone satisfy his deepest want. Contemplate God's righteousness and man's sinfulness, or God's might and man's weakness, and it is clear that God and man cannot stand upon the same level to contend together, As high as the heaven is above the earth, or rather hell, so high will the one ever stand above the other ; man must stoop under Him—must bow before Him.

*Dean Bradley.*—Job answers, in chap. ix., with a touch of irony? "Doubtless you are right! Wise are your words! You bid me turn to God and plead with Him. Vain counsel! How can man, though he feels his innocence, make good his cause before such an adversary? How answer one of the thousand questions which this dread opponent might put. We are transported, it may be, from Arab tent life to other scenes and associations. But we see clearly, what is more important, how far Job is drifting from his earlier relation to God as his *friend*. "Yes, the mightiest forms of Nature are weak before him, and what am I? Vain for me to plead and reason, or dispute with such a being! However good, however righteous my cause, I dare not answer Him; I could only grovel in supplication, vain supplication, before Him.

*Caryl* paraphrases thus:—"Bildad, dost thou surmise, by what I have spoken, that I have ill or hard thoughts of the justice of God? Did I ever think that justice was perverted, because I was afflicted? I acknowledge thou

hast truly said, that God doth not pervert judgment ; and I acknowledge thou hast faithfully counselled me to seek unto God, and make my supplication to the Almighty ; for, alas ! who am I that I should contend with God ? What am I that I should dispute it out with Him concerning my troubles, and His dealing with me ? Or, if I should be so rash, so fool-hardy, and adventurous, to attempt such a thing, alas ! I could make nothing of it ; I should not answer Him one argument in a thousand whereby He might maintain His own justice ; or to one charge or article of a thousand, whereby He might impeach mine. I am no match for God. Therefore I yield thee the whole matter, so far as concerns the honouring of God in that great attribute of His justice, and the duty of weak man humbling himself before that great God."

Bildad discoursed of justice under such a notion as renders it impossible for any man to be just before God. In one sense a man may be righteous before God, but in Bildad's sense no man can. "Would you not have a man know himself to be just, unless he know himself to be without sin ? If you take just to be the same as without indwelling sin, then it is impossible for any man to appear just before God ; but man may be just and righteous before God, though he have sin dwelling in him ; and that is my notion of justice in this dispute."

*George Hutcheson.*—Job not only grants what Bildad had asserted, but outstrips him far in commending the righteousness of God ; granting that no man can be so righteous as to be blameless before God, or to have cause of contending with God, as unrighteous in His afflicting of him, though that did in no way deprive a man of the testimony of his conscience concerning his own integrity.



In Bushnell's "Vicarious Sacrifice," p. 343, there are these suggestive notes: "God is just as being righteous; and justifies, simply as communicating His own character, and becoming a righteousness upon us. It does not read (Rom. iii. 26), that He might be just (retributively), and YET justify; but that He might be just AND justify—that is, that He might be so conspicuously, gloriously righteous.

*Sermons in Library.*—C. Simeon, "Folly of Self-righteousness and Presumption," Works, Vol. iv. p. 352.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—Compare the questions, "What good thing can I do, that I may inherit eternal life?" "What must I do to be saved?" with this text, which represents the form that soul-longing took in the earlier age. Bildad implied that Job was altogether wrong in persisting in his integrity. But Job knew the distinction between "integrity" and "perfection." He had never claimed perfection. He replies to Bildad, "I know it is so. God does not cast away a *perfect* man. But who has claimed to be perfect? Not I. For how should man be (absolutely) just before God? Job's was a right feeling so far as it went. But it was not the highest and best feeling a man may cherish. What would Job's question mean if an earnest and serious person were *now* to ask it, and what answer could now be given to such a man. I. *The Anxious Question.*—How much there is in it! It implies a real relationship between man and God. Man was made for God; God finds his rest in man. But the proper relations between the two are broken off. God can find no rest in man while man's heart is alienated from Him. Can the severed relations be restored? Can any man come right with God again? In the question we may

find impressive apprehensions of the Divine Being. What God is it that I am to compare myself with? Man is no separate and unrelated creature. Man is God's child. His humility is as beautiful as it is touching, when he measures his littleness against the greatness of his Father. There is the element of wilful sin to be taken into account in man's case. By his own acts of wilfulness man has made himself unjust. Recognise the distinction between "sins" and "sinfulness." A criminal is judged for his acts. A child is estimated in the light of his "sinfulness," his bad state of mind and feeling. 2. *A satisfying answer to the anxious question*,—Do we want to *be right* with God, or only to be *considered right*, whether we are or not? That is a very poor and unworthy thing for a man to want. A man must be *made* right before the truth-loving God will say he is right. God's redemption purpose is to make men right. It is regeneration. Our supreme concern is, not to be acquitted, but to be right—right in heart, and feeling, and thought of God. I cannot understand redemption until I see what it does *in me*. It makes me the Father's child again. If, as God's sons, we have gone wrong with our Father, the question of the text comes, for us, to mean this,—How can the wrong come right, and be set right again with God? The teaching of the New Testament is, that Jesus Christ is the Father's agent, the Father's power, to do both these things for us—to get us right, and to set us right. Work out how he is actually now effecting both these high purposes. "How shall man be just with God?" How? Why, the prodigal's way, the sinning woman's way. It was Jesus touched the woman's heart, and called back the childship. There is all the mystery.

## XLVIII.

### SOUL TRIUMPH.

"Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe."  
—JOHN xix. 5.

*Germ Thoughts.*—Whence comes a man's calmness, self-control, and mastery of circumstances, in the most afflictive and perilous hours of life? Some conditions may be met by natural stolidity and indifference; and some by courage, and strength of natural disposition. But for the supreme strain-times of life, nothing can be available save that soul triumph, which comes only by absolute trust in the abiding Fatherliness of our Father-God. When life reaches its climax, he only is strong whose soul is strong in God. It is precisely this "soul triumph" which is depicted in the figure of our Lord, presented in this text. There is all the majesty of perfect self-control; though, were they not awed by it, the bystanders might well laugh and jeer at the poor man who comes into view, dressed up in a soldier's old and faded cloak, and decked with a mock crown made of piercing thorns. Do what you may, you cannot take away the dignity of the man who has gained the soul triumph of perfect trust in the "hands of the Father."

*Scripture References.*—Matthew xxvii. 1-31; Mark xv. 1-20; Luke xxiii. 1-25; John xix. 1-16.

*Revised Version.*—"Jesus, therefore, came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment."

*Sketch of the Double Examination of our Lord by Pilate.*—It is important to trace the incidents in their historical order, so as to see just where this incident comes in, and estimate the exhausted physical condition of our Lord at this precise time.

Late on Thursday, the arrest. Night, or early morning of Friday, examination by Annas and Caiaphas. Friday, Jesus before Pontius Pilate and Herod.

Luke gives the division of Pilate's examination into two parts, by the reference to Herod. See Luke xxiii. 1-7, the first part of the examination; xxiii. 8-12, the reference to Herod; xxiii. 12-25, the resumption of the examination before Pilate. To get the precise time of the incident of the text, we must consult Mark xv. 15-20. It appears that, strained to the utmost in his endeavours to save Jesus, Pilate, at last, weakly gave way, fearing to exasperate the excited people, and seeking to sooth them by letting them have their will. He consented to the wish of the priests, that the execution should be by the cruel and disgraceful death of crucifixion.

What then occurred was the usual treatment of a criminal condemned to die by crucifixion. Such a Man was given over to the executioners, after being scourged in the presence of the governor. The brutal soldiers made game of Him, dressed Him up, mocked and scorned Him, and brought Him out to the people when they had dressed Him up, that they might scorn Him, too. This is the point we arrive at in the text. Presently, they put our Lord's own clothes on Him, and then led Him away to the place Golgotha.

*William Hanna, LL.D.*—"Last Day of our Lord's Passion," pp. 134-136.—The scourging did not satisfy the rude and brutal soldiers who had got Christ into their hands. This Roman cohort takes the hint that Herod's men of war had given them; who had thrown a

white robe over Jesus, clothing Him with something like the garment that their own kings wore, that they might set at nought His vain pretensions to be a king. And now, when the scourging is over, these Roman soldiers will outdo their Jewish comrades ; they will make a more perfect pantomime of this poor Galilean's royalty. They take some old military cloak, of the same colour with the robes of their emperors ; they throw it over His bleeding shoulders ; they plait a crown of thorns, and put it on His head ; they thrust a reed, as a mock sceptre, into His right hand ; and then, when they have got Him robed, and crowned, and sceptred thus, they bow the knee, and hail Him as a king. But they tire even of that mock homage. Then, they snatch impatiently the reed out of His hand, and smite with it the crown of thorns, and drive it down upon His pierced and bleeding brow, and spit upon Him, and smite Him with their hands. All this is done in an inner court, or guard-room, out of sight of the crowd that is still waiting without. Pilate is absorbed in wonder, as he gazes upon Jesus—such a picture of silent, gentle, meek, uncomplaining patience !—standing there, and taking all that treatment as though no strange thing were happening. There is no weakness in that patience ; but a strength, a power, a dignity. Pilate would try what the sight of Jesus might do in awakening public sympathy. He went forth, with Jesus following, and said to the people, "Behold, I bring Him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in Him." Then, turning and pointing to Jesus as He stood, wearing still the purple robe, and crown of thorns, bearing on His face and person the marks of all the sufferings and indignities of the guard-house, Pilate said, "Behold the Man ! Behold, and pity ; behold, and be satisfied."

*E. de Pressensé, D.D.*—Pilate sentences Jesus to be scourged, which was sometimes the method of putting the accused to torture ; sometimes, the preliminary of crucifixion. He hopes that the Jews will feel themselves sufficiently avenged by this degrading punishment. The soldiers treat Jesus with refined cruelty. As if to carry on Herod's horrible mockery, they clothe Him in a purple robe, put a crown of thorns on His brow, and a reed in His hand, then scourge Him without pity. When the proprætor brings Him forth to the people, bleeding and insulted, saying, "Behold the Man!" the cries of "Crucify Him!" rise again with redoubled force.

*Bishop Ellicott.*—Now followed the scourging, preliminary to crucifixion ; the crown of thorns, the scarlet robe, and all the horrible mockery of the brutal soldiery. The heart of the hapless Pilate was, perhaps, in some degree, touched. He strove to make one last appeal to the wild Jewish multitude without, by showing to them, with the garb of mockery, flung around that lacerated and bleeding form, the Man—the Man of their own race and nation, whom they had given up to such sufferings and such shame. But even this last appeal was utterly in vain ; nay, worse than in vain. That pity-moving sight only calls from the priestly party, fresh outbursts of ferocity.

*Dr. Whedon.*—Pilate now brings forth Jesus in His most piteous plight ; and, probably, mounting the gallery, or balustrade, slightly projecting over the court, presents Him in an elevated position to the view of the people. This solemn presentation of Jesus before the world, preceding His final delivery to death, has produced the most solemn impression upon the minds of the Church in all Christian ages. The pencils of the



great masters of Christian art have selected it as a choice subject. Pre-eminently, He stands forth—the Man—the Representative of the race ; the memento of our sin, the exhibition of our misery.

*J. F. Vallings, M.A.*—Nor could the influence of the prisoner's demeanour, so unlike a criminal's—so gently fearless, so noble in transparent innocence and wan dignity—have been wholly lost upon one, who was Roman enough to know a man, and whom magisterial and Roman bias would have prepossessed in favour, not in disfavour, of an object of Rabbinical odium. . . . It never occurred, even to cynical Pilate, that there was delusion, or imposture. Here was One, whose every word and look breathed manly dignity, appealing tenderness, and reserved force. Here was no slavish cringing, no hot fanaticism, no stubborn defiance. Jesus already bore the marks of cowardly insult ; but no suspicion of a quailing spirit, or a resentful temper, lurked under the open grandeur of the Perfect Sufferer.

*Dean Farrar.*—The low, vile soldiery of the Prætorium led Him into their barrack-room, and there mocked, in their savage hatred, the King Whom they had tortured. . . . The opportunity broke so agreeably the coarse monotony of their life, that they summoned all of the cohort who were disengaged, to witness their brutal sport. In sight of these hardened ruffians, they went through the whole heartless ceremony of a mock coronation, a mock investiture, a mock homage. Around the brows of Jesus, in wanton mimicry of the emperor's laurel, they twisted a green wreath of thorny leaves ; in His tied and trembling hands, they placed a reed for sceptre ; from His torn and bleeding shoulders, they stripped the white robe with which Herod had mocked Him—which must now have been all soaked with blood

—and flung on Him an old scarlet paludament, some cast-off war cloak, with its purple laticlave, from the Prætorian wardrobe. This, with feigned solemnity, they buckled over His right shoulder, with its glittering fibula; and then—each with his derisive homage of bended knee—each with his infamous spitting—each with the blow over the head of the reed-sceptre, which His bound hands could not hold—they kept passing before Him, with their mock salutation of “Hail, King of the Jews!” . . . As Jesus came forth, as He stood in the grandeur of His holy calm on that lofty tribunal above the yelling crowd, there shone all over Him so God-like a pre-eminence, so Divine a nobleness, that Pilate broke forth with that involuntry exclamation which has thrilled with emotion so many million hearts, “Behold the Man!”

*H. W. Watkins, M.A.*—The verse describes the scene as the writer remembers it. The figure of the Lord whom he had himself followed and loved, and of whom he thinks as ascended to the throne of the King of kings, led in the cruel mockery of royal garments, was one which left its mark for ever in his mind. Pilate’s “Ecce Homo!” is an appeal to the multitude.

*Sermon Notes.*—Dr. A. Raleigh’s famous sermon on “Behold the Man!” has the following divisions:—Behold the man whom—1, The world wanted; 2, the world rejected; 3, the world will crown.

*Sermons in Library.*—Walsham How’s “Plain Words,” p. 41. Bishop W. Nicholson “On Apostles’ Creed,” p. 251. A. Littleton’s Sermons, p. 53. R. Cecil’s “Original Thoughts,” p. 443. C. Simeon’s Works, Vol. xiv. p. 167.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—It is not surprising that the evangelists should dwell so fully on, and give such minute descriptions of, the closing scenes

of our Lord's life. They could but feel that His great majesty and glory more especially shone forth *there*. The inner, secret, uttermost greatness of a man is seldom called forth more than once in a man's career ; only in the "fiery trial that is to try us." But at such times multitudes of us fail. We either have not enough soul-greatness, or we have not our soul-greatness at command. Will our lofty ideas of Jesus bear the sorest, most awful trial to which human greatness can be subjected. (Compare the testing of Archbishop Cranmer) : I seal up for ever my admirations of Jesus Christ—my adorations of Him—if He comes well through the seven-times heated fires of His last days on earth.

1. *The crown of thorns, and purple robe, bring before us the agony through which He was passing.* Estimate the trial. The agony of a man is made up not merely of circumstances, but of circumstances and the nature which comes into relation with them. Show that our Saviour's must have been one of those refined, delicate, sensitive natures, that shrink back from evil, sin, suffering. There was divinity in it. There was womanhood in it. Remove all notions that Jesus did not *really* suffer. Rough, hard natures know nothing of the exquisiteness of agony through which others pass. There are flowers which will safely stand a good shake, but there are others (such as the speedwell and convulvulus) which bruise with a rough breath or touch. To what was our Saviour subjected? Describe scenes. Indicate the highly-strung nervous condition in which Gethsemane and the arrest had left Him. Then how He must have shrunk from Courts of justice, especially with the consciousness of innocence. Then the publicities ; the contumelies ; the sense of forsakenness and loneliness ; those rude hands touching Him ; and those

awful shoutings of the wild mob for His death. These were the things most trying to Him. It is with the realisation of them in our souls, that we feel so impressed with the magnificence of His coming forth, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe.

2. *The calm grandeur of His coming forth reminds us of the triumph He was reaching.* Estimate that triumph. It was *soul-triumph*. The thing which it is the supreme glory of our life to reach. The triumph of the martyr—the soul at rest in God. (Recall picture of the Christian peacefully sleeping in his cell, though the lions were raging for their prey.) What were the secret sources of this soul-triumph? It came partly from His inward sense of right; from His obedient acceptance of the Divine will; and from His purpose of love concerning the redemption of men. It came partly from the majesty of a sanctified and inspired will. The triumph was perfected in scenes that darkened from the contumely of the judgment-halls to the shame and heart-breaking of the Cross. The final triumph-cry burst forth—"It is finished." This is the "Captain of our salvation." Our leader. Our model. Is this then out of our reach? We can follow Christ along His suffering way. We can only share His glory as we share His soul-triumph. Commend—Soul-triumph over circumstance, learned of Christ, and won through His grace.

## XLIX.

### HOW WE BELIEVE IN GOD.

“Who by Him do believe in God.”—I PETER i. 21.

*Germ Thoughts.*—The subject specially suitable to the spring-time, which brings round the resurrection of Nature; which is the symbol and reminder of Christ's resurrection; and of ours in Him. This we have in two stages:—First, as resurrection from the death of sin to the life of righteousness; and second, from the death-limitations of the body to the life eternal.

There are three stages of faith. First we believe in *Christ*. Then our conceptions of Christ are enlarged by our apprehending God's relation to Him, and so we come to believe in *God in Christ*. Then the Christ gradually drops away, as an investiture and agency that helped us for a time, and we believe in *God through Christ*. *God* occupies the whole field of our interest, love, and faith. God has become “all in all.”

God as an abstract thought, cannot be apprehended by any creature limited to a brain organ. God in relations, and God through relations, can be known. Then He can only be worthily known in the highest of the relations He sustains. He can only be believed or trusted in the measure in which He is known. The highest faith depends on the highest knowledge. A

man can believe unto eternal life in the God whom he knows in, and through, the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Scripture References.*—For God's relation to the resurrection and glory of Christ, see Acts ii. 34 ; iii. 13 ; Matt. xxviii. 18 ; Eph. i. 20 ; Phil. ii. 9 ; Heb. ii. 9 ; iii. 2.

*Revised Version.*—"Who through Him are believers in God."

*Exegetical and Expository Notes.*—*Dean Alford.*—Ver. 20. The preciousness and completeness of this redemption is further enhanced by God's fore-ordination of it, and His bringing it to glorious completion in His own time. "Manifested," brought out of the *krupton* of God's purposes, into the *phaneros* of incarnation and historical world-fact.

Ver. 21. "By Him ;" personally ; made to you all that He is made, as the medium of your faith in God. The resurrection and glory are included in what He is made to you. That we are redeemed from our vain conversation, is owing to the blood of Christ ; but that we have faith and hope in God is brought about by God's having raised Christ from the dead, and given Him glory. Your faith rests on Christ's resurrection—it was God who raised Him. Your hope rests on Christ's glorification—it was God who glorified Him (comp. Acts ii. 22).

*Webster and Wilkinson.*—"By Him." This indicates that Peter had Gentiles in mind. They were brought to acknowledge the Father through the manifestation of the Son (Matt. xi. 27). To the Jews our Lord said, "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me." "Faith" relates to things present which, though invisible, are realised by the eye of the mind. "Hope," relates to things in the distant future, which are objects of such



loveliness, that they fill the heart, and engage the affections, as if they were near at hand.

*A. J. Mason, M.A.*—There is a better supported and more forcible reading, “Who through *Him* are faithful towards God,” which combines the ideas of believing—*i.e.*, putting the whole trust in God, and of loyal inward observance of Him. And if anyone asks whether it be possible to say that Hebrew men only came to believe in God through the revelation of Christ, we must answer by pointing to the whole scope of the Epistle to the Hebrews (especially chap. iii. ver. 12), where it is not faith in Christ but faith in a living God, which they are warned not to abandon; and to Heb. vi. 1, where faith toward God is part of the “word of the beginning of *Christ*.”

“That raised Him up.” These clauses give the historical facts which led them, “through Christ,” to a living faith in God. “That your faith,” &c., *lit.*, it is, “so that your faith and hope is in (or toward) God.” That is to say, “Your faith and hope does not stop short in Jesus.” Hammond paraphrases this: “Who by believing on Him (Jesus Christ) are far from departing from the God of Israel, but do, indeed, more firmly believe and depend on Him, as that omnipotent God who hath raised Christ from the dead.” We should terribly mistake the meaning of the Gospel were we content to rest in the love of Christ Himself without accepting *His revelation of the Father*.

*Critical Commentary.*—This verse excludes all who do not “by Him believe in God,” and includes all of every age and clime that do. *Lit.*, “are believers in God.” To believe *in* God expresses an internal trust. To believe *on*, expresses the confidence which grounds itself on God, reposing on Him. The only living way to God is through Christ and His sacrifice.

*Archbishop Leighton.*—The complete object of faith is, "God in Christ." The ground or warrant of faith is, "In that He raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory." A man may have, while living out of Christ, yea, he must, he cannot choose but have, a conviction within him, that there is a God; and further he may have, even out of Christ, some kind of belief of those things that are spoken concerning God; but to repose on Him as his God and his salvation, which is indeed to believe in Him, this cannot be but where Christ is the medium through which we look upon God. The warrant and ground of believing in God by Christ is this, that God "raised Him from the dead, and gave Him glory," which evidences the full satisfaction of His death. . . . The last end is, that we may have life and glory through Him; the nearer end, that in the meanwhile, till we attain them, we may have firm belief and hope of them, and rest on God as the giver of them, and so in part enjoy them beforehand, and be upheld in our joy and conflicts by the comfort of them.

*Sermons in Library.*—T. Knowles' Discourses, Vol. iii. p. 233. R. Walker's Sermons, Vol. ii. p. 137. C. Simeon's Works, Vol. xx. p. 171. Hon. G. C. Perceval's "Plain Sermons," Vol. iii. p. 144.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—After some reference to the importance which all the apostles attached to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, as illustrated in St. Paul's characteristic expression, "It is Christ that died, *yea, rather that is risen again*," proceed to show wherein lies the point and force of this text. It sets forth who is the *final* object of faith. It is not *Christ*, as we too lightly infer, it is *God*. "That your faith and hope might be in God." Our faith is only in

Christ, in order that it might be in God. But herein this text appears to differ from the usual run of texts about faith in the gospels and epistles. "By faith which is in me." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," &c. It can only *appear* to differ.

Wherein then lies the harmony of such differing statements? This must certainly be the first and most absolute of truths—Man's glory and blessedness comes, and only comes, out of fully trusting—believing—in God. Illustrate from Enoch, Abraham, Jacob, Davidic psalms, prophecies, &c. Such trust in God alone can set man in the right relations with God. Failing thus to trust is convincing proof that man has got wrong, has put himself out of right relations. Self-trust is now man's characteristic. It implies distrust of God, or wilful indifference to Him. From the very first of man's failure he had to be helped to right knowledge of God, faith in Him, and right relations with Him, by some means, agency, medium, or mediator. In their measure, trust in Abraham, in Moses, in Revelation, in Law, in Prophets was trust in God. Partial apprehension of God, and consequently but imperfect trust, and effective only in a low range.

To the mind of St. Peter, the Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Man, seemed to be the highest, most perfect, most gracious help to this necessary faith in God. For the Jew, who has faith in God, Christ is a clearing and perfecting of faith. For Gentiles, Christ is the medium through which all saving faith in God is reached. As Christianly educated, we may be said to occupy, in some sense, the Jew-place. But more truly we are said to follow on the line of the Gentile, and reach the full knowledge of God, and the full redemptive relations with God, by three stages of faith:—I. The

first stage of faith is faith in Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus has the most prominent place in the New Testament, in preaching, in teaching, in thinking, in writing, and in early religious experience. If there is anything self-evident, that is. And yet, Christ always puts the Father before Himself. He never proposes to absorb the faith and love of His disciples. He receives them only, that thus He might help them into the love and trust of the Father. At first Christ is presented to the seeking soul, and he fills all the vision. He seems to fill the whole foreground, and sways our whole manhood toward faith.

II. The second stage of faith is faith in God's relation to Christ. Once setting our heart on Christ, our faith wants to know better Him on whom it rests. There are more and deeper things in Jesus Christ than the soul can see in its first apprehensions of Him. Now what is it that comes into view when we let the apostles guide us into the mysteries of the resurrection? This—God was in the closest relation to the Redeemer Himself, and to the Redeemer's work. In the second stage faith embraces both God and Christ, as working together in the accomplishment of human salvation.

III. The third stage of faith is faith in God, which swallows up, absorbs, the faith in Jesus. But this stage of faith is usually reached unconsciously. Many an experienced Christian stands on this level to-day, and does not know that he does. Young Christians pray to Jesus. Old Christians pray to God. We begin, and we see Jesus, and God is in Jesus. We grow, and more and more we see God, until at last we see God only, and Jesus is in God. It remains still true that all the forms of thought are taken from Christ. Our faith and hope at last are fully set on God, and the law of life is fulfilled—God has become "all in all."

## L.

### THE SOUL'S IMMORTALITY.

“Who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.”—2 TIM. i. 10.

*Germ Thoughts.*—Immortality has hitherto been treated in connection with the theory that man is, and always must be, a composite being. He must be, wherever he is, an immaterial soul *and* a material body. Immortality, for certainly most men, means the continuity of this composite being. It has therefore been closely associated with a doctrine of the resurrection of the body.

But another apprehension of the being of man has been gaining favour in recent years, and wherever it is received it changes the ideas concerning the immortality which is brought to light by the Gospel. Man is essentially a spirit-being; and he is placed for a purpose, and for a time, within the limitations of a sensuous environment. Death is man's liberation from the environment, but death cannot touch the spirit-being that man *is*. That soul which is quickened in Christ knows nothing of death. Christ hath abolished death; all the strange fears and sentiments men have about death. Christ has brought life to light; we put sublimest meaning into it when we call it spiritual life. Christ has brought immortality to light. There is no obscurity about it

now. It is the necessary continuity of spirit-being; the blessed continuity of the regenerated spiritual being.

*Scripture References.*—1 Cor. xv. 54, 55; Heb. ii. 14. For the association of the terms eternal, immortal, and life, compare 1 Tim. i. 17; Rom. ii. 7. For immortality as included in the nature of God, see 1 Tim. vi. 16. For mortal and immortal as different investitures of the soul, see 1 Cor. xv. 53, 54. Immortal and immortality are exclusively Pauline terms. No other Scripture writer uses them. They are essential to St. Paul's apprehension of redemption as the regeneration of the *soul that man is*.

*Various Renderings.*—For "hath abolished," read simply, "abolished and brought." By "abolished," meaning, "made of none effect." For "immortality" read "incorruption," as contrasted with "mortality," in 1 Cor. xv. 53. Revised Version reads, "Who abolished death, and brought life and incorruption to light through the Gospel."

*Exegetical and Expository Notes.*—*Bishop Ellicott.*—"When He made of none effect," or, more exactly, "having made, as He did, of none effect," "death": either regarded (*a*) objectively, as a personal adversary and enemy of Christ and His kingdom, 1 Cor. xv. 26; or (*b*) as a spiritual state or condition, including the notions of evil and corruption; or, more probably, (*c*) as a power and principle, pervading and overshadowing the world. "Life and incorruption;" the latter substantive characterises and explains the former; not, however, with any special reference to the resurrection of the body (1 Cor. xv. 42), as this would mark "incorruptible" as a condition; but with a reference to the essential quality of the "life," its imperishable and incorruptible nature (1 Peter i. 4), and its complete exemption from death



(Rev. xxi. 4); compare Rom. ii. 7. It may be observed that "death," as a known and ruling power, has the article (*ton thanaton*). "Life" and "incorruption," as only recently revealed, are anarthrous.

*H. D. M. Spence, M.A.*—"Now made manifest:" the grace, a gift given to us in Christ from all eternity, but hidden during unnumbered ages, till the fulness of time—the appointed time—arrived, the "now," when it was made manifest. The simple act of incarnation by no means covers the "appearing." The "appearing" (Epiphany), here includes not only the birth, but the whole manifestation of Christ on earth, including the Passion and the Resurrection. "Abolished death:" more accurately, "when He abolished or made of none effect." The Greek word thus rendered signifies that by the action of the Lord, death was rendered inoperative, comparatively harmless—its sting was removed. The "death thus made of none effect, has a far more extended meaning than that separation of soul and body we are in the habit of calling "death." It signifies that awful punishment of sin which is best described as the exact opposite to "eternal life." The death we are acquainted with by sad experience here is only the forerunner of the death eternal. Already to the believers in Jesus this death of the body counts for nothing; the time will come when it will even exist no more.

"Life and incorruption." "Life" here is that true life, in its highest and completest sense, which includes the most perfect happiness—a happiness a foretaste of which is enjoyed on this side the grave; over it (this bliss) death now has no power. St. Paul says, Christ "brought to light" life and incorruption, not only from having imparted to His own these glorious and Divine attributes, but chiefly because he had displayed (or

manifested) the life and incorruption in His own resurrection body before our very eyes.

*Conybeare and Howson* translate the verse thus :—  
“According to his own purpose and grace, which was bestowed upon us in Christ Jesus before eternal times, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who has put an end to death, and brought life and immortality from darkness into light ; by the glad tidings, whereunto I was appointed herald, and apostle, and teacher of the Gentiles.

*Dean Farrar* renders, “who did away with death.”

*Prof. Agar Beet.*—On the general question of man's immortality. “We have already found reason to believe that the intelligence and the moral sense of man were not produced by the operation of natural forces, but by the inbreathing of a higher life into a body closely related to the bodies of animals. Only thus can we account for the impassable line separating the lowest men from the highest animals. If so, we can well conceive the author of this higher life promising to His new-born creature, man, that if he were loyal to the guidance of this new and nobler life, he should escape from the doom of death to which all lower animals were subject. Certainly, he who was able to *breathe* into bodily form the spiritual life was able to *guard* it, even in a body of flesh, from the stroke of death. And I may venture to suggest, in view of the close relations between men and animals, that, had man been faithful in his day of trial, his victory would possibly have reacted on the animal kingdom, and have rescued it from its ancient doom. Man obeyed the impulses he had in common with animals, and thus sank to the level of mortality.”

*Sherlock.*—The Gospel has given a more full and sure proof of a future life and immortality than either

the law of Nature, or that of Moses. If the abolishing of death was the bringing to light life and immortality, the coming in of death must have been that which so darkened Nature.

*Dr. Channing*,—Before Christ immortality was a conjecture or a vague hope. Jesus, by His teaching and resurrection, has made it a certainty. Channing elaborates an argument for immortality from the distinction between mind and matter.

*Dr. Newman Smyth* argues that real science cannot conflict with the belief in immortality; but, in consistency, it must allow it, and affirm, if not its truth, at least its probability. Now after we have won such objective grounds for the belief, it receives higher importance from religious, natural, and moral motives. It is a postulate of the ethical belief in God as love. Reason leads to the same result; for reason which obtains throughout the creation requires the conception of the highest end, and therefore the passing from temporal-becoming into eternal-being. So also, the ethical ideas of the true, good, and beautiful, lead to the same conclusion. These are ideals whose perfect realisation involves immortality.

*Illustrative*.—This declaration can only be fully realised as we estimate the state of knowledge and feeling in the Roman Empire about the time of our Lord's appearance. An instance will aid us in such a realisation better than elaborate descriptions. "Sixty-three years before the birth of Christ, according to the usual reckoning, Julius Cæsar, at that time the chief-pontiff of Rome, and, as such, the highest functionary of the State religion, and the official authority in religious questions, openly proclaimed in his speech in the Senate, in reference to Cataline and his fellow-conspirators, that there was no such thing as a future life, no immortality of the soul. He opposed

the execution of the accused on the ground that their crimes deserved the severest punishment, and that, therefore, they should be kept alive to endure them, since death was, in reality, an escape from suffering, not an evil. "Death," said he, "is a rest from trouble to those in grief and misery, not a punishment ; it ends all the evils of life ; for there is neither care nor joy beyond it." Nor was there anyone to condemn such a sentiment even from such lips. Cato, the ideal Roman, a man whose aim it was to "fulfil all righteousness," in the sense in which he understood it, passed it over with a few words of light banter ; and Cicero, who was also present, did not care to give either assent or dissent, but left the question open, as one which might be decided either way at pleasure (*Cunningham Geikie, D.D.*).

*Sermons in Library.*—Sherlock, Vol. i. p. 124 ; Channing, Vol. i. p. 618 ; Howe, Vol. vi. p. 183. See also F. W. Robertson, "Lect. on Corinthians, pp. 211-213. Archbishop Tiltonson's Sermons, Vol. ix. 309.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—Prefer following translation:—"Who hath made death ineffective, and hath brought the incorruptible life to light by His Gospel." In the introduction give some explanation of the language of the text, and point out its connection in the Apostle's thought. Bring out the force of the passage as indicated in the above translation ; and show how closely this fits in with New Testament teachings. Treat the subject in two divisions. 1. Human life with the shadow of death on it. Illustrate the Old Testament view of life ; the pagan view ; the present heathen view. Give special expressions used by the Psalmist, by Job, and by Hezekiah. The grave always throwing its shadow on the landscape of human life. The grave is—(1.) A monument of human guilt. (2.) A state of extreme degradation. (3.) A universal recep-

tacle. Philosophers have indeed expressed some fine and worthy sentiments concerning immortality; but the mass of the people had no light at all on the life beyond; nor has the materialistic philosopher, in these our Christian times. At most they can say, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Compare the Christian revelation with the intimations of Deism; the dreams of Egyptian magi; the Elysian fields of Pagan poetry; the sensual rewards provided in Heathen religions; and the low-typed Paradise of Mohammedanism.

2. Human life with the rays of the incorruptible on it. In ancient times there were only sun-glints and lightning flashes, momentarily relieving the darkness brooding over man's future. And even yet fleecy clouds are in our sky, and they temper and qualify the rays that shine on the mystery of our future life. And yet we have one clear, full ray, which ought to suffice, at least as a sufficient inspiration for faith and hope. In the resurrection of Christ is declared the absolute continuity of Christ as a spirit-being. As for death, in His case it was abolished. "It was not possible that He should be holden of it." Apprehend Christ as a spirit-being, and it is clear that *He* never died. Life and immortality are brought to light in Him. We understand them now. Life is soul-life, eternal life, and that is incorruptible and immortal. Alive in Christ, we can never die. We want to live our daily lives now without this awful shadow of the grave on them. May we? How may we? "He that liveth and believeth on Me shall never die." Close by describing the familiar picture "*Mors janua vitæ.*" Let the rays of Christ shine on death, and He is plainly enough but the radiant angel of the gate, who opens to let the living soul go through, from this life to that.

## LI.

### OUR LIVING AVENGER.

“ But I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand up at the last upon the earth : and after my skin hath been thus destroyed, yet from my flesh shall I see God ; whom I shall see for myself, and not another. My reins are consumed within me.”—JOB xix. 25-27 (Revised Version).

*Germ Thoughts.*—This passage demands a most careful and unbiassed investigation and consideration, because certain later theological notions have been applied to it, and effort has been made to explain it in the light of those notions. What has to be first sought is, the precise idea which was in the mind of Job, for which he tried to find fitting expression. He was a man misunderstood and misrepresented. Nay, he was a man suffering under overwhelming afflictions, for which no possible explanation could be found in his moral character. No reason for his troubles could be assigned. Yet he was sure that he was safe in the hands of God ; and that He would some day vindicate Himself in these strange dealings, and put all seeming wrongs to right. So firm is Job's confidence in God that he is restfully assured, the Divine vindication will come even in his life-time. The turn of the tide, and the restoration of health and prosperity, would plainly prove that, whatever might be the explanation of his



troubles, they had been no punishment of special sins. The truth comes to view, that Job was vicariously serving God, by teaching the ages that man's explanations of human suffering have never yet dispelled the entire mystery of them. A man may suffer purely for other people's sakes, not his own. Jesus Christ did.

*Scripture References.*—Psalm xvii. 1-5 ; 1 Cor. xiii. 12 ; 1 John iii. 2.

*Various Renderings.*—For "Redeemer," read "Goel," "Avenger," "Vindicator"; for "at the latter day," read "at the last," lit., "as one coming afterwards;" ver. 26, the text is doubtful. Read, "after this my skin hath been mangled;" "in my flesh;" or "without"—i.e., "when stripped of my flesh." The original of these verses is almost untranslatable.

*Exegetical and Expository Notes.*—*Caryl.*—Jewish writers interpret this context of a metaphorical resurrection, in reference to Job's outward condition, or of his resurrection from a state of affliction. They conceive that Job therefore calls God his redeemer, because he had to that day preserved him alive in the midst of so many deaths and dangers, as also because he had an assured hope that he should, through the power of God, survive them, and be restored to such an estate of honour and riches, as he had enjoyed in the former part of his life. Caryl prefers the second sense, that Job holds forth his faith in a resurrection, not to a temporal good in this life, but to eternal life.

*Ewald.*—Slowly, like one feeling for the right way, Job turns from the most unhelpful of men to the highest God, until at last the full certainty dawns upon his soul, that it is the eternal true God who is also the one deliverer of innocence ; and that the indestructible spirit will, after the death of the body, behold the Divine revelation in infinite joy, whereby he finds unexpectedly

the proper weapons against the terrible threats of the friends who have lost all compassion.

Although this utterance is borrowed from the ancient sacred duty of avenging blood, as this duty at least had originated in the thought of an unchanging righteousness, and necessary retribution, everything here appears, at the same time, in new relations, because it is not a man, but God alone, who can be thought as the avenger, or restorer, of the innocence of the man who dies from no sin of his own. . . . The spirit of the deceased man must behold its own justification even after the destruction of the body.

*Dean Bradley.*—Then there passes from his lips words into which Christian translators have breathed a distinctness, a hope and certainty, which doubtless far transcends the sublime, but dim, faith of the original. "I know," he cries, "that my Redeemer, my Rescuer, my Vindicator, liveth, for He is none other than the living God. And He, at the last, when all this bitter conflict is over, will stand upon the earth, or rather on the dust, the dust of death into which I am sinking. And even after my skin (this poor skin, with all that it encases) is destroyed, yet even then, not *in*, but *from*, my flesh, though my body moulder in the dust, I shall see my God. He will manifest Himself at last to His forgotten friend, who will have survived for this the shock of the great Destroyer."

We dare not write into his words all the "sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection" which the Christian utters; still less that anticipation of a bodily rising from the grave, of a re-clothing of the spirit in flesh, which the passage breathes in the great Latin translation, dear for ages to Western Christendom.

*Delitzsch.*—The skin of my teeth, the only part of my

body left sound. The Rescuer of his honour lives, and will rise up as the last one, as one who holds out over everything, and therefore as one who will speak the final decisive word. "Earth," or "dust:" this must mean the dust of the grave. An Arab would think of nothing else. Ætinger's translation is: "I know that He will at last come, place Himself over the dust in which I have mouldered away, pronounce my cause just, and place on me the crown of victory. This confidence he has in God he wants inscribed on a monument. Ver. 26, Delitzsch does not think the hope of a bodily recovery is expressed. See Job's mood of mind in chap. xvii. 10-16. He refers to a spiritual beholding of God out of the body. (But Delitzsch cannot confine the idea to this.) Job imagines the spirit as clothed with a new spiritual body, instead of the old decayed one. His faith is here on the direct road to the hope of a resurrection; we see it germinating, and struggling towards the light. Even if he dies, he will not give up his hope in God, as an innocent man."

*Bishop Wordsworth.*—Job is now almost exhausted by the violent passion of his friends, and he is forced to hurry away from them, and take refuge in God.

The duties of a Goel-Redeemer, or Avenger, were, to deliver a kinsman carried into captivity, as Abraham did Lot (Gen. xiv. 14-16); to recover his lands by purchase, as Boaz did; to avenge the death of a murdered kinsman; and to marry the surviving inheritrix. Christ is our Goel.

*E. B. Pusey, D.D.*—No doubtful meaning of any words can efface from this passage the doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh.

*Speaker's Commentary.*—Job asserts that his calamities are not reconcilable with any known principle of the

Divine government. They come from God. His cause, being the cause of righteousness, is secure, for God (Who has hitherto but shown Himself in wrath) is Himself his Redeemer ; a Redeemer now living in heaven ; hereafter to be manifested on earth ; to be seen by Job's own eyes, after the destruction of Job's whole bodily frame. By "Redeemer," we understand One who takes up a man's cause, and vindicates his rights, either by avenging him on his foes, or by restoring him, or his heirs, to possessions of which he has been defrauded. "Job has already expressed a wish that there might be an umpire between him and God ; then he goes further, and desires an advocate ; then declares that he had a Witness—One Who exactly knows his rights—in heaven ; then calls upon God Himself to be his Advocate. He now takes a stronger position ; and declares his certainty that there is One Who adds to all these conditions, that which gives them solidity, and assures his final triumph : there lives One Who will vindicate his righteousness, and clear his cause completely."

*Noyes'* translation reads thus :—

"Yet I know that my Vindicator liveth,  
And will stand up at length on the earth ;  
And though with my skin this body be wasted away,  
Yet in my flesh I shall see God.  
Yes ; I shall see Him, my Friend ;  
My eyes shall behold Him no longer an Adversary ;  
For this my soul panteth within me."

This rendering, being more precise and literal, brings out clearly the idea of the poet, and makes it plain that Job rather expected his Vindicator to appear on this earth while he lived, than gained any clear vision of the adjustment of all perplexities in the life to come.

*A. B. Davidson, D.D.*—The term "Redeemer"

(Hebrew, Goel), is frequently used of God, as the Deliverer of His people out of captivity ; and, also, as the Deliverer of individuals from distress. Among men, the Goel was the nearest blood relation, on whom it lay to perform certain offices in connection with the deceased, whose Goel he was ; particularly, to avenge his blood if he had been unjustly slain. Job here names God his Goel. The passage stands in close relation with chap. xvi. 18, 19, where he names God his "Witness," and "Sponsor," or Representative. It is probable, therefore, that there is an allusion to the Goel among men ; Job has, in God, a Goel who liveth. This Goel will vindicate his rights against the wrong, both of men and God (verses 3, 7). At the same time, this vindication is regarded, less as an avenging of him—at least, on others—(though compare verses 28, 29), than as a manifestation of his innocence. This manifestation can only be made by God appearing and showing the true relation in which Job stands to Him, and by Job's seeing God. For his distress lay in God's hiding His face from him ; and his redemption must come through his again beholding God in peace. Thus, the ideas of Goel and Redeemer virtually coincide. The words "earth," or "dust," do not mean earth, in opposition to heaven ; such an antithesis did not need to be expressed ; if God came forward, or interposed, on Job's behalf, He must do so upon the earth.

*Sermons in Library.*—R. Barclay, *Sermons*, p. 151. Walsham How, "Plain Words," p. 236. J. Heywood, *Works*, Vol. v. p. 509. J. Parsons, *Sermons*, p. 363. C. Simeon, *Works*, Vol. iv. p. 403. J. Disney, D.D., *Sermons*, Vol. iv. p. 195.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—It is important to make clear that no revealed truth is dependent upon

any particular proof passage, with which it may have been supported. The doctrine of the Second Coming, and the Resurrection of the Body, have long been supported by this passage in Job, but they are not dependent on it. They are what they are, even if it has to be fully recognised that Job's range of thought is limited to events that may occur during his present life ; and if his words must be read in the light of Eastern notions, concerning the family Goel, avenger, or vindicator.

What requires to be more clearly seen is that, judged by literary standards, the Book of Job is a poem—we should say, a philosophico-religious poem—written in the time of Solomon, and based upon an ancient Arab tradition. It may carefully be compared with Tennyson's "Idylls of the King." The poet, in writing it, has a distinct purpose in view. He is attempting to deal with this difficulty. The calamities that befall men will not always get explanation by the accepted formula, that "where there is sorrow, there must have been sin." He works out the answer, that God may make earthly calamities His agents in carrying on His great morally redemptive work for the race ; and, therefore, He may bring calamity on some, simply that thus they may serve others. Much of human trouble is vicarious.

As a poem, the range of the Book of Job is limited to the strictly earthly experiences of the patriarch. Its expressions may suggest more than this to Christian-minded persons ; but we need not associate all *our ideas* concerning it with the poet-author, so as to affirm that he had them in his mind. It will give fresh force and meaning to many passages, if we can read them in the light of a hoped-for earthly vindication and restoration.



It may first be shown that there are a thousand perplexities of human life, circumstance, and relationship, which are wholly beyond the explanation of man, and whose mystery is, for the present, absolutely hidden in the inscrutable wisdom of God. Why does righteous Job lie stricken amid the ruins of all his life-attainments? God only can answer that question. Man makes sad mistakes when he tries to answer it.

But the individual on whom the calamity falls, may be sure of this—however perplexing things may seem to be, they will work out into a full vindication of a man's integrity and trust. God never makes any such mistake as punishing a man for nothing. All God's afflictive dealings are not punishments. They may be testings; they may be discipline; they may be a provision of inspiring example and hallowing influence for others. Of this we may be quite sure—every man whom God uses is safe in God's hands. His honour is safe; his integrity is safe; his circumstances are safe.

Whether the vindication of a man can always be accomplished in this life, so that the man himself can know it, may be uncertain. That the vindication will come in this earthly life for *other people to know it*, is quite certain. We have that faith in God.

## LII.

### THE CHRIST-WORKER'S AIM.

"He shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work."—2 TIMOTHY ii. 21.

*Germ Thoughts.*—The character and work of Timothy are of such special interest to us, because he is on *our* plane of ministry, and not on the apostolic. With a special inspiration, we think of the apostles as carrying a special authority, and as accomplishing particular and unusual results. After the apostles we have ministers engaged in ordinary work, endowed with average gifts, and moved by usual impulses of the Spirit, and we feel that we may learn from them what *we* may hope to be and do. Their standard is not beyond us. We have a despairing feeling that we could not be Pauls if we would. But we might be Timothies.

Or get at the same point another way. What a man wishes for a junior in the ministry is the ideal for himself, that he has not been able—or thinks he has not been able—fully to attain. In telling Timothy what he might become, if he would, St. Paul reveals what he thought was the highest possible aim of the Christ-worker, what he supremely desired and sought for himself. He would be a vessel which the Master might "honour" by using. He would have that vessel entirely separated for the Master's use, made wholly fit and

efficient, and set always ready, so that the Master might at once take up and use it whensoever and howsoever he may please. Such a vessel, or implement, St. Paul wanted Timothy to become, and he urged him to do everything possible on his part in order to get his vessel thus fitted for the Master's use.

*Scripture References.*—Isaiah lii. 11; 2 Tim. iii. 17; Titus iii. 1.

*Various Renderings.*—"Meet for the Master's use" means, "Serviceable to the Master." *Revised Version* only omits and before the word "prepared," and before the word "meet." No other change is made.

*Exegetical and Expository Notes.*—*Ellicott.*—Ver. 21. An encouraging and consolatory exhortation, general in form, yet not without special reference to Timothy. "Shall have purged himself from:" he is to have "no communion with impugnors of fundamentals." Note previous references to "false teachers." "Unto honour" is to be directly connected with "vessel"; the three defining clauses more fully explaining the meaning of the term. "Meet," or serviceable, chap. iv. 11. "Per opera bona, quibus et suæ et aliorum salutis ac necessitati ad Dei gloriam subserviant" (*Estius*). "Prepared for every good work." (For, or unto, *eis*), referring to the ultimate end and object contemplated in the preparation. Though opportunities might not always present themselves for an exercise of the "preparation," yet it was there against the time of need.

*Canon Spence.*—Ver. 20. In a great house are always found two distinct kinds of vessels—the precious and enduring, and the comparatively valueless, and lasting for but a little while; the first kind are destined for honour, the second for dishonour. Ver. 21. If Timothy would separate from all that was evil in his church at Ephesus,

then would he indeed be one of the golden vessels unto honour "meet," *i.e.*, useful for the Master of the house. "Prepared," ready to take advantage of any opportunity which may offer itself to do a generous, noble action. *Chrysostom* would have the "vessel unto honour," ready for any emergency which would enhance the glory of the Lord—ready even for death or (any painful) witness.

*Rev. George Barlow.*—High moral character qualifies for exalted service in the Church. Paul was himself a vessel of honour: once among those of wood and of earth, he afterwards became by grace one of gold. Full, out and out consecration to God is the qualification for noblest work. God intrusts His loftiest missions to His holiest servants. What constitutes fitness for Christ's service? 1. Uprightness of character. 2. Fidelity to duty. 3. Love. 4. Peace.

*Dean Farrar.*—This is the last letter St. Paul wrote. When, over the ruins of streets which the fire had laid in ashes, St. Paul returned to his lonely prison, there was one earthly desire for the fulfilment of which he still yearned. He yearned to see Timothy once more, to be refreshed by the young man's affectionate devotion, to be cheered and comforted by the familiar attendance of a true son in Christ, whose heart was wholly at one with his, who shared so fully in all his sympathies and hopes, who had learnt, by long and familiar attendances, how best to brighten his spirits, and supply his wants.

Timothy is to shun the vain babblings of men like Hymenæus and Philetus. . . . There need be no surprise that such errors spring up in the visible Church. It is like a great house in which are vessels of wood and earth, as well as of gold and silver, and alike for honourable and mean purposes. What each one had to do

then was to purge himself from polluting connection with the mean and vile vessels, and strive to be "a vessel unto honour, sanctified, serviceable to the Master, prepared for every good purpose."

*On Timothy's Character.*—Slight as are the touches which enable us to realise the character of the young Lystrenian, they are all wonderfully graphic and consistent. He was so blameless in character that both in his native Lystra and in Iconium the brethren bore warm and willing testimony to his worth. In spite of a shyness and timidity, which were increased by his youthfulness, he was so entirely united in heart and soul with the Apostle that, among his numerous friends and companions, he found no one so genuine, so entirely unselfish, so sincerely devoted to the furtherance of the cause of Christ. He was, in fact, more than any other the *alter ego* of the Apostle. Their knowledge of each other was mutual. . . . Young as he was, the quick eye of Paul saw in him the spirit of loving and fearful duty—read the indications of one of those simple, faithful natures which combine the glow of courage with the bloom of modesty.

*Sermons in Library.*—J. H. Newman, D.D., "Parochial Sermons," Vol. iii. p. 242. Thomas Taylor, D.D., Works (1653), p. 481. C. Simeon, "Saints, Vessels of Honour," Works, Vol. xix. p. 38.

*Suggestions for Working out Sermon.*—In the ordinary household there are some vessels, utensils, implements, and instruments which are for necessary, but inferior, uses. Used unto comparative dishonour. "Would rather be a doorkeeper." But some are for higher, and more evidently important, uses. They are unto honour. Some of the vessels are not touched by

the Master. They are used *for* the Master *by* the servants, but some are reserved exclusively for the Master. The pen which the Master only uses—therefore honourable. We, members of Christ's Church, are as members of Christ's house, servants, agents, agencies for various service. We are engaged in His service when we are renewed by His grace, and become personally His. But the question is, shall we be vessels unto honour, or unto small honour. We may well long to be what the Master Himself may use, and what it may be a pleasure for Him to use in His best work. Scatter for ever the notion that we are redeemed for privilege ; we are redeemed for service. Illustrate the different estimate of vessels by describing the various utensils necessary in the old temple worship.

On our side, what can be done to make our vessels such as the Master might think could be used unto honour, for the highest and most honourable services. We ought to be *separated*. This is the meaning of "sanctified." Taken from common uses. Devoted to holy uses. Kept absolutely for those holy uses. We ought to be *fitted*. If vessel, by cleanliness. If implement, by sharpness. If instrument, by efficiency and easy working. Ready, as doctor's case of instruments.

By a "vessel," understand a soul, with a body of powers relative to some particular portions of God's work in the world.

May we have a full confidence that the living Christ will use the instrument, or vessel, that is kept for use ; always efficient and ready to hand. Yes ; we may. He may keep us waiting. But the waiting time will but perfect the efficiency. When the work for which He wants us is ready for the doing, He will be sure to take us up and use us.



Our ideal—our aim—is to be an instrument set aside for Christ, and kept for Him ; polished and sharpened for His service, and always laid ready to His hand. It means that we are always sensitive to His touch and impulse ; quick to see where there is His work that He would have us do. It gives us a holy jealousy, and sets us upon keenest watchfulness, lest subtle self, or any other rival power, should try to use us. We are exclusively for the Master's use.

Possible divisions :—1. What may a man make of himself as a vessel ? He can keep it clean, fit, and ready. 2. What will God make of man as a vessel ? An agency for use, *His use*.









